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LONGFELLOW
AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

WILLIAM P. TRENT

AUTHOR OF "GREATNESS IN LITERATURE," "A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE," ETC.

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NOTE

THE present collection comprises in the main addresses and papers written since the appearance of the volume entitled "Greatness in Literature," published in 1905. Two or three papers, originally designed as introductions to books, have an earlier date.

W. P. T.

NEW YORK,
April 1, 1910.

TO

Henry Holt

With sincere admiration and affection

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I

LONGFELLOW

[Delivered at the unveiling of a bust of the poet at the University of Illinois, on Class Day, June 10, 1907, and printed shortly after in the University's quarterly organ.]

I

THERE is surely one statement we may make without fear of contradiction about the ceremony which occupies us to-day, and that is that no one will dispute the propriety of the presentation of a bust of Longfellow to an institution of learning. There are people who contend that Longfellow is not a great poet, but I know of no one who contends that he is not in many ways a true and eminent representative of the culture a university exists to spread. Not only was he a teacher in two colleges for a period covering about a quarter of a century, but he was probably the most important link for almost two generations between the culture of the old world and that of the new. Merely, then, as a teacher, lecturer, critic, and translator, whose home was in the New England from which emigrated so many of the pioneers of the Northwest that is honoring him to-day, Longfellow would be worthy of this memorial and of these commemorative exercises.

Another statement may be made about this ceremony without fear of contradiction. We are met to-day to honor a man with regard to

whose private life we fear no serious disclosures, a man who will seem worthy of love and admiration for his many virtues, no matter what changes the future may bring in the standards of manners and morals. It is not every good man who should have a statue, and no man, however good, should have a statue bad enough to be an eye-sore; but every memorial erected to a distinguished man who was not also in the main a good man will be made the subject of censorious criticism. I do not say that this is right; I merely say that it happens. There are some people so constituted that they cannot recognize greatness where it exists apart from the kind of goodness they most easily comprehend. There are also people so constituted that they cannot appreciate greatness when it is exerted in favor of a cause to which they are opposed. To this day there are men and women who do not acknowledge, or else acknowledge very grudgingly, the greatness of Napoleon Bonaparte and of John Milton. But in the case of Longfellow no questions are raised as to his private character, and it is almost impossible to conceive of him as the object of partisan love or hate. There may be a question as to the quantity of the laurels binding his brows; no one thinks of asserting that those laurels are or ever can be really sullied.

I do not know whether what I have just said will seem to all of you a matter of congratulation in connection with Longfellow and with this ceremony. The man about whose virtues there can be no dispute doubtless irritated people long before the days of Aristides the Just. I suspect that more than one of the stone hatchets that mark the former presence of the cave-men on our earth left its original owner's hand to seek the skull of some other slightly more exemplary savage. The foremost of Americans is notoriously not the most interesting. The most ideal poet in English literature, whose life seems on the whole to have been as beautiful as his verses, counts his genuine admirers by the score rather than by the thousand. If you say that a man is a Spenserian, most people, unless you spell the word, will suppose that he spends his days and nights in studying the Synthetic Philosophy, not in reading "The Faerie Queene." On the other hand, one of Spenser's friends and contemporaries, who with all his merits had some very grave faults, Sir Walter Raleigh, has had his defects, not merely forgiven, but forgotten, because after a brilliant and romantic life he suffered a pathetic death, and because he was heartily interested in the planting of America. We say that he was basely murdered by a cowardly king and we name the capital of one of our States

after him—spelling the name, I may add, on the authority of the Dictionary of National Biography, in the only way out of some seventy odd forms that he seems never to have used—and all the while we conveniently overlook the fact that his last ill-fated expedition to Guiana was little more than a visionary piece of piracy on a large scale. We use the proverb "Give a dog a bad name" without recognizing that the proper conclusion ought to be—"and he will raise up a host of partisans to himself and live in song and story." How much of the vogue of Byron, Shelley, and Poe has been due to the defense of which their conduct has sorely stood in need? How much—to pass from the moral to the intellectual sphere—has the widely vouched for obscurity of Robert Browning, by leading to the establishment of Browning Clubs, contributed to his renown?

Longfellow seems to most of us to be as good as gold and as clear as crystal—excellent reasons why persons of allegedly discriminating taste should prefer poets who may be fittingly compared with cloudy stones set in gun-metal. There is little or nothing in Longfellow to attract a dilettante, an esthete, a mandarin, a decadent, in a word, anyone who, unlike Wordsworth's phantom of delight, has more than a suspicion that he himself is

too bright or good
For human nature's daily food.

Longfellow for nearly three-quarters of a century has been the mental food of countless Americans and Englishmen, indeed of perhaps three-fourths of the men and women who constitute what we are pleased to call the reading public, a phrase which seems to be a euphemism for the public that reads a very small amount in a very few books. This public is a large one, and the fact that Longfellow is thoroughly good and clear and wholesome makes him one of its few favorites. But small though this public's range of reading may be and however little it is qualified to furnish sound critical reasons for its choice of favorites, the fact remains that it alone is able to give an author the sort of reputation that is widespread and permanent enough to deserve to be called fame. A writer, for example, like the Englishman with the Italian name, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, is deservedly ranked among the greater Victorian poets and is favorably known to special lovers of poetry throughout the English-speaking world. Students of literature in our colleges know something of him; but fame such as Longfellow attained more than half a century ago has never come to him and most probably never will come. Walter Savage Landor, to take an-

other example, is a writer of prose and verse whose eminence no competent critic will dispute, but to give Landor a popular reputation would overtax the powers of all the critics and all the professors of literature writing and teaching to-day throughout the world. And Landor had written distinguished verse more than a decade before Longfellow was born. Nor can scholars and critics secure popular fame for an author even when, besides showering their praises upon him, they can hold him up to admiration as a discovery of modern times—as a great writer whom our short-sighted ancestors overlooked. In the person of the Elizabethan physician and musician, Dr. Thomas Campion, modern scholars —especially Mr. A. H. Bullen—have added to the glorious roll of the poets who have written in the English tongue one of the most authentic and exquisitely beautiful of all song-writers, a lyric poet worthy of a place not so very far below the feet of Herrick and Burns and Shelley. But though the glamour of novelty be still about him, has this new poet a real chance to win genuine fame? Is his name ever likely to mean half so much to the public as that of a lyric poet whose laurels the critics tell us are very much faded—the little Irishman to whom Byron gave his hearty toast in verse, "Here's a health to thee, Tom Moore"? Literary prophecies are al-

ways notoriously in danger of proving false, but it seems to be very safe to predict that Campion and Landor and Rossetti will never be popular names, and that Longfellow will continue for an indefinite period to maintain his hold upon the hearts of the people.

Now I am not going to be rash enough to attempt to give the reasons why the writers I have named have not attained popularity, or to try to show that the public is a good judge of literature. If anyone wishes to say that it is idle to expect nice literary discrimination from a population as mixed and crude as that which swarms in this new country and gives its allegiance to all sorts of idols with feet of clay, I shall not search the vast literature of democratic apologetics for arguments with which to confute him. I am now concerned only with the facts that there are certain writers who win and hold the popular mind and heart and thus secure a recognition sufficiently widespread and permanent to be denominated fame, and that Longfellow is definitely enrolled among these few and fortunate writers. I am concerned also with the fact that the large public does not, as a rule, take to its heart any author whose work is not morally sound and intellectually clear. And, as it rarely happens that a writer's work is essentially independent of his life, it

follows that what was said about the goodness of Longfellow's character has an important bearing on his fame, whatever the effect of that goodness may be upon the interest of those persons who desire the gods of their literary idolatry to be as peccable as the divinities with whom of old the Greeks peopled Olympus. Longfellow the man, in the eyes of his fellow countrymen, was as good as gold; Longfellow the poet is the most popular of all American authors; these two propositions hang and fall together. If this be true, it will be worth while to take a brief glance at his career and at those portions of his work that seem to be marked by enduring qualities.

II

The chief facts of the early life of the child who was born a hundred years ago in the town of Portland in the District of Maine are, I take it, four in number. He came of solid and excellent English and New England stock; his nature was from the first a blend of the characteristics of his admirable parents, strong yet gentle, self-poised yet sympathetic; he was endowed with a genuine native faculty for culture and for artistic self-expression, which was fostered by the education his father and mother were in a position to give him; and, last but not

least, he grew up among a homogeneous, unsophisticated people within sight and hearing of the far-stretching, mysterious sea. These four facts will be found singly or in unison behind nearly all the poems of Longfellow that really count for the world—behind, for example, "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "Flowers," "The Psalm of Life," "The Bridge," "Evangeline," "The Courtship of Miles Standish," and "The Saga of King Olaf." Few poets have better comprehended the romance and the power of the ocean, the beauty of flowers, the sentiments that touch the heart and the resolves that fire the mind of youth, the joys and the fears of love, the calm thoughtfulness of mature years, and the reverend charm of age. Life in all its multitudinous fullness it was not in Longfellow's power to grasp and present; it was not his to live apart upon the heights of thought, or to haunt the wildernesses of despair, or to dwell a privileged denizen in the realms of fairyland. With his nature, his training, his environment, any such exceptional development of his genius would have been more than ordinarily surprising. His early years prepared him to be a true and very influential poet within somewhat conventional lines, not to be one of the giants or the demons or the fantastic elves of literature.

The four facts I have just enumerated might

all be dwelt upon with some profit, but I shall comment for a moment only upon the last of them—the fact that Longfellow grew up among a homogeneous, unsophisticated people. In this fact lies, I think, one of the most potent of all the causes of his pervasive influence and popularity. It is among the homogeneous, compact peoples, in the main, that the arts have had their greatest flowering. It is among comparatively unsophisticated but far from backward peoples that native genius seems to stand the best chance of coming to its own. Now in the evolution of American life these three elements—homogeneity, compactness, lack of sophistication unaccompanied by backwardness—have been found fully united and fused only in the New England of the first half of the last century. It is precisely in the New England of that period that we find our nearest approach to an epoch of fairly copious, sustained, and important literary production. We have had great authors who did not represent New England life and training—some of them greater perhaps than any writer New England can claim as her own—but we have had elsewhere in America nothing that approximates a distinct and notable school of writers. It is to this fact and also to the facts that settlers from New England have penetrated to the farthest corners of our country and that the basal

New England virtues are, fortunately, the basal virtues of the American people taken as a whole, that the predominance of New England in our literary history is chiefly due. The individual genius of an Emerson, a Hawthorne has, of course, counted for not a little, but the influence exerted by the compact, well-defined school has counted for more. Of this school the most typical, the least eccentric and extravagant representative was, beyond all doubt, the poet whom we are considering. He was comparatively untouched by the impracticable features of transcendentalism; although he wrote a few anti-slavery poems, he was nothing of a political partisan; though far from destitute of humor, he certainly aroused not the least suspicion that he was a jester or a freak. He was not too high for the many, or too low for the few. He was clear, wholesome, gracious, sympathetic, fluent, melodious, cultivated, not unendowed with fancy, and saved by his common sense from being fatuously sentimental. What wonder that he became popular with his countrymen whose ideals he so well represented, being himself the typical product of a simple and refined New England, which had broken gently with the rigorous Puritan system and was dominated by an optimistic belief in the orderly evolution of men to individual and national felicity in a new

and favored world? What wonder that, since this optimistic belief still persists among us, despite the shock of the Civil War and the confusion and the perplexities that have resulted from our expansion as a nation during the past thirty or forty years, we still open our hearts to the pure, natural, kindly poet who won the love of our grandfathers. Perhaps the most encouraging and significant fact about our celebrations of Longfellow's centenary is the proof they afford that, in an epoch which lays a childish emphasis on its strenuosity, so many strong, thoughtful men have taken delight in expressing their reverence for a man who in his life and in his writings illustrated the truth that to be entirely noble and inspiring human strength must not be divorced from tenderness and purity.

Of Longfellow's college life at Bowdoin from 1822 to 1826 little need be said, since in the main it was a prolongation of the quiet life he had led at home. He continued to read and dream, to avoid rough sports, to display a chivalrous regard for women, and to carry out the precepts of that spiritual, undogmatic Unitarianism which satisfied his religious aspirations from his earliest to his latest years. With Bryant, Irving, and Cooper laying the foundations of a native literature, it is not surprising that he should have resolved to be a writer, or that he

should have composed some not very remarkable poems. Nor, in view of the provinciality of the country and the epoch, is it at all extraordinary that these poems, when published, should have gained him a reputation out of all proportion to their merits. What puzzles one is the question whether, if he had been less kindly treated by fortune, if he had had a taste of the misery which befell that Chatterton, for a copy of whose works he paid the few dollars coming to him for his own poems printed in *The United States Literary Gazette,* Longfellow would have gained a deeper insight into life and a mastery of the more sonorous chords of the poetic lyre. Tragedy did not pass him entirely by, but it made its entrance late—long after the character and scope of his genius had been determined. To wish to change the sweet, guileless, attractive record of Longfellow's early years would be a kind of profanation—they made him what he was—but to repress the wish is only to recognize one of the reasons why, with all his excellence and all his reputation, he is not enrolled among the supreme masters of song.

For over three years after his graduation he traveled and studied in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, preparing himself to be Professor of Modern Languages at Bowdoin. To-day college trustees would demand a candidate four

or five years older, equipped with a doctor's degree. As one of the best of his biographers, the late Professor George Rice Carpenter, has well said, the poet felt no need of the systematized German scholarship which his friend George Ticknor, who was far in advance of the times, had advised him to acquire. What Longfellow wanted was culture, linguistic practice, contact with the richly complex life of the old world. What he wanted was what the new world, homespun and unsophisticated, really longed for, despite the crass, stentorian self-assertiveness of those Jacksonian times. Irving had celebrated the charms of historic Europe, Willis was soon to picture the delights of travel and the glamour of fashionable life, Thomas Jefferson, Ticknor, Bancroft, and Legaré had realized what great services the scholarship of Europe might render in broadening and deepening American education. Longfellow seems, in a rather remarkable way, to have combined and harmonized many of the qualities and functions of all these men. He was in full sympathy with the past—especially with that of Spain—he was young and active enough to enjoy the color and the movement of a strange world—he was so attractive that foreigners and expatriated countrymen took him to their hearts—and yet he was too conscientious to neglect the studies that were needed in the

profession he had undertaken. His journal shows that he was a wide-awake, sympathetic traveler and, for an Anglo-Saxon, a very accomplished linguist, whose acquirements were genuine, whatever the thoroughness of his scholarship.

Thus he returned to America prepared to teach and write in a way that would produce a more permanent and inspiring effect upon the public than was possible to any of his literary predecessors or contemporaries. When after about ten years devoted to teaching and writing prose he turned again to poetry, he touched the hearts of his readers in a more intimate and sentimental way than the equally tender but more formal Irving had done. He stood upon a higher plane than the versatile Willis. He did not imitate Ticknor by settling down in his study among his books. While he was traveling and while, after his home-coming, he was busy teaching and translating text-books and writing lectures and contributing articles to *The North American Review* and collecting his sketches of travel into a volume entitled "Outre-Mer," his college-mate Hawthorne and his future critic Poe were slowly working out the principles of their art amid surroundings not altogether propitious to their genius and in the face of temperamental and financial obstacles such as he was

never destined to encounter. After nearly three-quarters of a century we can perceive that the two lonely, struggling story-tellers struck into less trodden paths and reached higher places upon the mountain of inspiration; but their gentle, less individual contemporary was attended to his humbler station by the tears and smiles and benedictions of thousands of men and women who were oblivious of the fact that his rivals for fame had passed beyond him. I think that part of Longfellow's work is for all time, that his place is secure and high upon the mountain of inspiration; it is no matter of opinion but rather of positive certainty that almost the whole of his work was of great profit and pleasure to two generations of his countrymen. He led them along the inviting paths of old-world culture, and he sang to them the songs of new world courage and faith and kindliness. Could there have been a more truly noble mission of a practicable kind, and could anyone have been more fitted for it by temperament and training than the young man who in 1835 accepted the call to succeed Ticknor at Harvard?

Although I am not so restricted in time as Longfellow was when in his graduating speech at Bowdoin he was expected to mete out justice to all our native writers in the space of seven minutes, I must, nevertheless, pass rapidly over

this period of our poet's preparation. As a teacher he seems to have been flexible and sensible; he comprehended the student heart just as later he did that of the large public; he broadened his knowledge of books and criticised them sanely, though not, perhaps, with special acuteness. During the eight years prior to 1832 he wrote practically no poetry, but whether, if he had seriously tried, he could then have trained himself to become a great prose writer seems to me rather doubtful. It is not open to doubt, however, that during those years travel, work, and marriage matured him greatly as a man, or that, when before entering upon his duties at Harvard he sailed for Europe a second time, his period of preparation had reached its final stage.

This second journey brought him his first great sorrow—the death of his young wife—and introduced him to the literatures of the Scandinavian nations, which had a deep influence upon him. It also strengthened greatly the hold of German sentiment and romance upon his spirit, chastened as that was by his bereavement. This meant a softening, an emotionalizing—if I may so phrase it—of his poetry and a consequent widening of the appeal he was soon to make to his countrymen. Within three years after his assumption of his duties at Harvard and his installation in the famous Craigie House,

the author of "Hyperion, a Romance" and of "Voices of the Night" had fairly begun his career as a popular favorite of the most exceptional kind—a favorite against whom there is practically no revulsion. Young people going to Europe no longer expect to follow the footsteps of Paul Fleming, the somewhat naïve hero of "Hyperion," but the "Voices of the Night" are still vocal in the "Psalm of Life" and "Footsteps of Angels." Their chief appeal was probably made through their didacticism, which is what some people of our day make a fad of objecting to, as though all didacticism were bad in itself—a proposition true apparently only for those who are beyond the reach of teaching. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that the "Psalm of Life" was didactic and, if we may judge from the stories told about the inspiration it afforded to this and that susceptible person, there is equally little doubt that it and its companion poems were very popular and well adapted to the needs of the Americans of two generations ago. Those same Americans also perceived that the new writer was a more melodious verse-man than any of their poets to whom they had lent an ear. He had caught from his beloved Germans a certain simple sweetness which appealed to a kindred people who did not know that he might have borrowed from the

English poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and from their successors Coleridge and Keats deeper and richer harmonies than could be derived from any continental source. Admirable though his metrical art became within its limits, Longfellow rarely caught those harmonies, and, as he himself admitted, he could not attain the higher reaches of blank verse; but most of his contemporaries did not realize his shortcomings. If they had, they would have hailed Poe's "To Helen" and "Israfel," and would not have waited for his "Raven" before yielding that wayward genius a grudging acknowledgment as an exceptionally, though narrowly gifted poet. There is no need, however, to dwell upon this point, though it may be worth while to remark that it is the rich harmony and color of Poe that have affected later poets like Rossetti and Swinburne, and that the simpler sweetness of Longfellow has made him a favorite with the people, not only in England, but throughout the Teutonic world. His appeal to the Latin races, though not negligible, does not seem to have been strong, but he is sufficiently cosmopolitan to answer well one of the best tests of literary eminence. To speak slightingly of Longfellow's poetry in the face of its hold upon two generations of readers in several countries is more or less to proclaim one's indifference to

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the teaching of that portion of culture-history which deals with literature.

Yet we need not rely entirely or in the main upon the teachings of literary history in order to justify our appreciation of Longfellow's merits as a poet. His themes and his way of treating them may not be those of Poe, but they are surely those of a genuine poet, whose admirable qualities as an artist in verse emerge the more clearly the more sympathetically and carefully his works are studied. Think of the felicity and power of the opening stanza of "Seaweed":—

> When descends on the Atlantic
> The gigantic
> Storm-wind of the equinox
> Landward in his wrath he scourges
> The toiling surges,
> Laden with seaweed from the rocks.

Think of the elevation and sincerity of the invocation that closes "The Building of the Ship":—

> Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
> Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
> Humanity with all its fears,
> With all the hopes of future years,
> Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

Think, finally, of the "piercing pathos," if I

may borrow from an apt phrase which Matthew Arnold employed in connection with a few lines of Burns's "Auld Lang Syne"—the piercing pathos of these stanzas from "The Bridge," all the more piercingly pathetic because they are so unpretentious and so universal in their application:—

Yet whenever I cross the river
On its bridge with wooden piers,
Like the odor of brine from the ocean
Comes the thought of other years.

And I think how many thousands
Of care-encumbered men,
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,
Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession
Still passing to and fro,
The young heart hot and restless,
And the old subdued and slow!

And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes;

The moon and its broken reflection
And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here.

Shall we haggle about the epithets applicable to the man who could write such poetry?

III

These quotations have carried me forward a little in point of time and I must return to 1842, the next year in Longfellow's life that requires a brief notice. In the course of that year he made a third visit to Europe and published his third volume of verse. The visit inspired, among other poems, the pleasing and popular "Belfry of Bruges," which gave the title to a collection issued in 1846, four years after "Ballads" and "Poems on Slavery" had made his reputation practically unassailable. The first of these volumes, the "Ballads," in such a piece as "The Wreck of the Hesperus," not only showed Longfellow's ability to carry out the purpose expressed in his statement, "I have a great notion of working upon the people's feelings"; but also started him on a line of work in which he was destined to win success—to wit, as a narrative poet. "Evangeline," "Miles Standish," "The Golden Legend," some of the "Tales of a Wayside Inn," to name no others, suffice to prove that Longfellow ranks among the more eminent of the poets who have tried to tell stories in verse, and, so far as I can judge, his attempts in this kind have kept fresher than the more romantic metrical narratives of Byron and

Moore. I will not go so far as to assert that Longfellow's stories in verse are great poetry, but I will point out the difficulty of finding really great narrative poetry in English since the days of Chaucer, the allegory of Spenser and the epic of Milton being put to one side. Longfellow, I repeat, ranks high in narrative poetry, as a true poet of a very different type, Mr. Austin Dobson, has lately told us in an appreciative sonnet.

The "Poems on Slavery" fortunately demand less notice now than they did half a century ago. Like the equally gentle and urbane Cowper, Longfellow was averse to strife of any kind—his "Journal" shows this on page after page—but both were exceptionally sensitive to sufferings and wrongs borne by humble men and women, and both uttered protests against the anachronistic institution which was demolished in our great war. Longfellow was not so consummate a master of irony as Cowper, but he was perhaps more effective by means of his vivid imaginative pictures of such atrocious if uncommon scenes as that described in "The Quadroon Girl," and also through the metrical skill displayed in his small volume. It is easy to exaggerate the merits of the "Poems on Slavery"—I think, for example, that Mr. Howells has recently been guilty of this—but on the other

hand, it is equally easy to minimize both their temporary and their permanent value.

In 1843 Longfellow published "The Spanish Student," which illustrated his love of Spain and his total incapacity as a dramatist; and he married his second wife, Miss Frances Appleton. She brought him love, beauty, children, wealth, and for nearly twenty years—until her tragic death by burning—she made his life as serene as befitted his disposition and his chosen lines of labor. It seems almost idle to speculate with some biographers as to what Longfellow might have become if he had married a less sophisticated woman and had lived in a more bustling community. He was thirty-six years old, his character had been formed, the lines of his activity had been determined. One may wish that he had been somewhat shaken up earlier in his life; dropping into metaphor, one is glad to find that after he settled down to a steady stroke in his voyage on the river of time, he was able to keep it up for a splendid stretch. For about seventeen years he seems to have led a truly ideal life for such a poet as he aspired to be. He was idolized by his readers and could afford to be magnanimous when Poe rather captiously assailed him. His friendships with such men as Felton and Sumner and Agassiz continued green; he dispensed hospitality to a

group of attractive acquaintances and to eminent foreigners; he could turn continually to his books, especially to his beloved Dante. He planned a great poem, the "Christus," which should unfold the evolution of Christendom in the apostolic, the mediaeval, and the modern periods, and he brought the second part of it at least, "The Golden Legend," to a state of perfection sufficient to satisfy many a lover of the Middle Ages and to make some critics wonder why so charming a poem has been so inadequately admired by the public. He published the popular "Evangeline" and "The Song of Hiawatha," both extraordinarily successful despite their novel metrical forms; and he reached the zenith of his narrative power in "The Courtship of Miles Standish," which had its roots in the graves of Longfellow's Puritan ancestors, if I may be allowed to use so grewsome a figure of speech. In short, by adding sustained, elaborated poetical works to his fugitive pieces he became in the eyes of his countrymen and the world, the representative American poet of his day and a man of letters whose preëminence none could dispute or dream of envying. It is not a romantic career, nor one that is thrillingly inspiring, but do I exaggerate when I call it one that is delightful and worthy of emulation?

> We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
> But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

So sang Wordsworth, and Shelley declared that

> Most wretched men
> Are cradled into poetry by wrong;
> They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

If these two eminent poets laid down the rule, Longfellow—and let us hasten to add the singularly self-centered Wordsworth himself—furnished the exception. Prior to the great tragedy of his life Longfellow's causes of complaint, if we may trust his diary, were mainly three—weak eyes and neuralgia, the importunities of autograph-hunters and other bores—and the demands upon his time and patience made by his college duties. With regard to his academic troubles he showed himself, I think, a trifle querulous and weak, but by 1854 he was able to resign his professorship at Harvard and to devote himself entirely to literature. Until he was past fifty, his might well have been deemed a life favored by the gods. Contrast it with that of the most popular poet of the generation before he was born, the ill-fated William Cowper, with his ever-recurring attacks of derangement and his conviction that he was a specially devoted

victim of the wrath of heaven. Contrast it with that of the tempest-tossed Byron or of that waif of fortune, Poe! Less romantic, less interesting, less pathetic we must certainly pronounce it to have been. Yet I can scarcely name in the annals of literature a lovelier life, and Longfellow stands beside Cowper as an almost unapproachable example of true urbanity and gentle manliness. Charm is no bad substitute for interest, and the charm of Longfellow's character and life is reflected in his works—in the "Hymn of the Night," "The Day is Done," "The River Charles," "The Village Blacksmith" and "The Children's Hour." The man who wrote those poems was precisely the man to reply to Professor Norton who expostulated with him for being over-sympathetic and forbearing with a bore—"Charles, who will be kind to him if I am not?" He had also humor enough to ask when a certain lady was besieging him for a poem—"What *shall* I do with a 'strong-minded woman' after me?" And occasionally even Longfellow's gentle spirit rebelled and we think all the better of him for his sporadic self-assertion. He once declared that he would not read Mr. Blank's poem unless Congress passed a special law requiring him to do it. Congress did not pass the law, did not even require him to be interested in its own proceedings during what

was probably the most momentous decade in our history as a nation. Perhaps more interest in the strife of parties would have meant a stronger poet than the author of "Evangeline," and a greater novelist than the author of "The Marble Faun." But Whittier and Lowell, and Mrs. Stowe and many another author who showed far more concern for the evolution of American life than Longfellow or Hawthorne ever did, surely did not surpass either of them in essential character or in important achievement. Let us be careful then not to criticise too harshly Longfellow's apparently easy-going life —the comparative desultoriness of his methods of composition and study, his lack of enthusiasm for the Transcendentalists and the Abolitionists, his rounds of mild social pleasures, even his fondness for a cigar and a game of billiards— in short, his ability to enjoy his good fortune during the years when his wife hovered about him as his ministering angel. It is not given to every one to lead the severely strenuous or the severely simple life.

IV

With July, 1861, for I must pass rapidly to my conclusion—the month that taught the nation what a tremendous conflict it had upon its

hands—came the cataclysm of Longfellow's life. He bore his affliction with a quiet fortitude that was heroic. Eighteen years later he could master his feelings sufficiently to write his beautiful sonnet "The Cross of Snow," but he could not make any sort of capital out of his sorrow, and the poem was given to the world only after his death. Perhaps the depth of his grief comes out most significantly in a reply he made to some well-meant but banal remark about the necessity of his bearing his cross—"*Bear* the cross, yes; but what if one is stretched upon it?"

He had nearly twenty-one years to live, however, and he was not idle, though it may be doubted whether the writings of this period added very greatly to his fame. He published his "Tales of a Wayside Inn," which contained some creditable work, and "The New England Tragedies," which few people have read. He paid a last visit to Europe, and like Cowper and Bryant he found comfort in accomplishing a set task of translation. His version of Dante's Divine Comedy ranks high among English works of its class; his own ambitious "Christus," completed after years of preparation, fell short of his hopes. Other volumes need not even be named, but the briefest survey should take note of his sonnets and of the equable "Morituri Salutamus," a veritable old man's poem which he

read in 1875 at the semi-centennial of his class at Bowdoin.

Upon the sonnets the younger generation of critics like to dwell. A natural patriotic bias makes them anxious to say all they can in favor of one of the most distinguished figures in their country's literature, and they are also influenced by the charm of Longfellow's character and by the dignity of his old age, which impressed their own youth. Their standards of artistic excellence are different from those he set himself in his early years—they require more originality and depth of thought and feeling and a subtler sense of poetic values than can be discerned, let us say, in "Excelsior," in "Evangeline," in "The Bridge"—and they naturally emphasize such ballads as "The Skeleton in Armor," where his mastery is plain, and his sonnets, a favorite verse form with many of the greatest British poets of the last century and one in which only a true artist can invariably succeed. I am far from wishing to deny the right of these critics to praise Longfellow's sonnets, for such excellent poems should have the widest sort of currency; yet I cannot help suspecting that, good as Longfellow's sonnets are, they will never win the right to be placed side by side with the best sonnets of Wordsworth and of Keats, and that they will never mean to the American peo-

ple what "The Bridge," "The Day is Done," "Resignation," "Twilight," and similar lyrics have meant and still mean. Without desiring to minimize the danger I may run of degenerating into a sort of demagogue-critic forever bent upon flattering the public into the belief that it is an inspired judge of literature, I must still express my very distinct respect for the public's ability to tell what it wants and to determine in a broad way the vital features of the writings it admires; and it seems to me that the American public long ago took to its heart, not so much Longfellow the cultivated poet and the careful artist, though in a true sense, as I have already said, his culture meant much to the generation that first welcomed him, as Longfellow the tender, sympathetic teller of tales like "Evangeline" and the pensive, moralizing poet of lyrics like "The Bridge."

I go farther and maintain that, while Longfellow as a narrative poet deserves to stand high, and while, in his treatment of native themes as in "Hiawatha" and "Miles Standish," he helped to win our national independence in literature, nevertheless his most individual and in many respects his most notable achievement in poetry is to be found in those lyrics which express the pensive sentiment so thoroughly characteristic of their author and so universal in their

appeal to our common human nature. This pensive sentiment Longfellow expresses with great felicity in scores of poems, employing simple stanzas that are sufficiently full of imagination or fancy to please special lovers of poetry, yet not so essentially poetic as to bewilder and alienate the average reader to whom poetry is far from being a daily delectation. In this felicitously sentimental appeal to the human heart and in this wholesomely reflective appeal to the human mind Longfellow has probably not been excelled by any other modern poet, not even by Tennyson himself, who is often a trifle too academic. In other words, Longfellow has contributed to the literature of our race not a few lyrics of sentiment and reflection that have gone straighter to the hearts of more readers than any similar verses of his contemporaries or successors. If to praise such poems highly be a sign of lack of culture, as some exigent critics seem to fancy, then I for one am bold enough to declare that I think we need to revise our definition of culture. There is really no reason, however, for our essaying such an ungrateful task. Longfellow's truest poems have taken their place amid the best that has been said and thought in a world that is not rich enough in good things of the mind and spirit to be able to afford to lose them. And Longfellow's attrac-

tive life and engaging character will abide in men's memories along with his choicest poetry, since they too constitute in a very real sense an exquisite poem, since they too belong to the songs that

> have power to quiet
> The restless pulse of care,
> And come like the benediction
> That follows after prayer.

II

THE HEART OF MIDLOTHIAN

[Printed in *The Sewanee Review* for April, 1909.]

I

THE last time I had occasion to use one of those curious assortments of books that do duty for a ship's library, some whim caused me to take out "The Heart of Midlothian." I had not read it for many years, and beyond the names of the two Deans sisters and the nature of the offense for which the younger was imprisoned, I scarcely recalled a feature of the story. Perhaps the facts that I had recently re-read with much pleasure "Old Mortality" and that "The Bride of Lammermoor," "Quentin Durward" and "Ivanhoe" were fairly fresh in my memory, had something to do with my choice of a book which my vague recollections and my general knowledge of critical opinion led me to regard as one of the very best of the seedy-looking volumes of fiction that offered themselves for my delectation. Perhaps too my choice was partly determined by some conversations I had lately been having with a delightfully healthy-minded man who had frequently expressed his great admiration for Scott. The main point, however, is not why I re-read "The Heart of Midlothian," but that I did re-read it and that I want to say something about it.

If I am not mistaken, Mr. Andrew Lang has somewhere given as a receipt for culture of a certain type, the maintenance of a profound contempt for Scott and a complete ignorance of everything else. It is certainly a convenient and a widely-used receipt. But, unfortunately, people who know a good deal about some things often make use of half of Mr. Lang's receipt. They either have a contempt for Scott themselves, or they speak of him and of writers of his kind, such as Cooper, in a loose fashion which induces in less intelligent persons that profound contempt to which Mr. Lang sarcastically refers. When university presidents emphasize Scott's wholesomeness as a writer for boys and fail to add that they themselves would be wiser and not sadder men if they re-read him every year, they do not very greatly advance the interests of mankind. When modern novelists compare that product of a century's coöperative labors, the succinct, well-organized novel of our times, with the somewhat amorphous product of Scott's day and generation, without giving us reason to suppose that they have ever studied the evolution of any category of art and learned to distinguish the temporary from the essential, the contributions of genius from those of mere talents, the cause of criticism is scarcely subserved. Finally, when the excessive reading of

the Waverley Novels, supposed to have been indulged in by the Southern people, is seriously treated as one of the causes that led to our Civil War, an admirer of Scott may be pardoned if he wishes that good Sir Walter's fame were safely locked up in Greek characters. Some one will soon be saying, if indeed some one has not already said, that the King James Version beheaded Charles the First.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that, although Mr. Lang, when he gave vent to his laudable sarcasm, probably had some of his fellow Britishers in mind, what I have been saying is not necessarily intended to apply to them. Perhaps, however, the most completely naïve statement I ever heard made about Sir Walter was one vouchsafed to me by a well-known English critic. He was a great admirer of Robert Louis Stevenson, the news of whose death had reached England not long before. Scott had not been mentioned by us, but Sir Walter was a dead Scotchman who wrote stories and poems, and so was "R. L. S." Comparison was inevitable, and in the height of his loyal enthusiasm, the Englishman exclaimed to me: "I tell you, Stevenson was a greater writer than Sir Walter Scott."

There was no scene, not even an argument. I was the younger man and a stranger, and to

tell the truth, it was not Sir Walter Scott who in those days was the god of my literary idolatry —he never has been—and of any leanings to the Stevensonian cult I was as innocent as a newborn babe. There was no reply to be made and the conversation took another turn; but I thought a great deal about that enthusiastic statement, and I have never forgotten it. I have no doubt that it has been made many a time by persons of a certain degree of sophistication, most of whose reading has been done within the last ten or fifteen years and has been confined in the main to modern writers. It is in some respects an entirely natural and an easily explicable statement; but it is none the less, from some points of view, exceedingly naïve.

I have no intention of saying anything derogatory to that interesting and attractive writer whom the English critic pitted against Scott. In the matter of careful style he could certainly have given Sir Walter some very useful lessons. But this is not saying a great deal. There are numerous sentences in "The Heart of Midlothian" which could be easily improved by many of the students now taking courses in English composition under my colleagues at Columbia University. With Scott's methods of work, infelicities of style were inevitable, but most of them could have been eliminated with but little

trouble if they had seriously disturbed him or his readers. That they did not greatly disturb either was partly due to the facts that modern English prose was hardly a century and a half old when Scott wrote, and that formal instruction in English composition and in the history and criticism of English fiction was scarcely dreamed of. Stevenson was the product of a much more self-conscious era than that of the later Georges, and in consequence he was a better writer in many particulars than Sir Walter ever was or could have been. This is very far, however, from saying that he was a better writer in the most essential particulars—that his style was weighter, more dignified, more adequate than Scott's style at its best. There are sentences, paragraphs, and whole pages of "The Heart of Midlothian" which the young persons who study English composition under my colleagues would not hesitate to rewrite, but which I am inclined to think they would not improve. I must hasten to add that I am far from wishing to speak disrespectfully of the niceties of style now that Pater and Stevenson by writing have made life worth living; yet is it not written, or ought it not to be written, that man does not live by ambrosia alone?

But the Englishman did not say that Stevenson was a better writer than Scott; he said that

he was a greater writer, and I have called the remark naïve. It is naïve because it illustrates so aptly the innocent and childish propensity to think that what we like much and know well must be great because it greatly impresses us. There are many reasons why certain modern writers should impress sophisticated readers more profoundly than old-fashioned writers of far larger calibre can possibly do. Unless, however, an author has appealed to all classes of readers through a fairly long period of time, it is merely a sign of enthusiasm, not an exercise of the judgment, to call him great in any absolute sense of the epithet. And to compare a writer of such limited appeal as Stevenson with one of such world-wide and long-tested appeal as Scott, ought to be possible only to those ingenuous persons who speak in response to the dictates of a transcendental inner voice, or mistake—to paraphrase Tennyson—the thin murmur of their little circle for the deep-toned utterance of the world of men.

II

But I started to say something about "The Heart of Midlothian," and that admirable story is surely better worth talking about than the opinions some people are pleased to express with

regard to Scott's genius.[1] Whether it is the greatest of all the Waverley Novels is a rather unimportant question which cannot be authoritatively answered; but there can be no doubt that "The Heart of Midlothian" ranks near the top, and that, when such a book is not certainly a writer's best, that writer possesses a high and copious genius. That it is well constructed from our modern point of view can scarcely be maintained with any justice, for one's interest is bound to flag after Jeanie obtains favor in Queen Caroline's sight, and that happens in the thirty-seventh chapter of a book which contains fifty-two. And Scott did not even have the excuse that he was furnishing a chapter to every number of a weekly for an entire year. He did

[1] Even in France where Scott had the extraordinary fortune of practically creating a new species of fiction and of influencing for a while the writing of history, young people find it in their hearts, according to M. Anatole France, to say unpleasant things about their benefactor: *"Et voici qu' à un tournant de la conversation, nous nous rencontrons nez à nez avec Walter Scott, à qui mon jeune dédaigneux trouve un air rococo, troubadour et 'dessus de pendule.' Ce sont ses propres expressions."* —*Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard.*

One likes young people, however, no matter what they say. It is less easy to preserve one's equanimity when older people talk as though they had drunk of the fountain of perpetual youth, which, I take it, is kept constantly supplied by the streams of ignorance and enthusiasm. See our recent centenary literature *passim.*

have a certain normal amount of space to fill, however, and he was writing for a leisurely public which was interested, as he was, in pictures of Scottish life and manners and was distinctly pre-possessed in favor of such exemplary narratives as bestow upon virtuous characters fitting rewards and bring due punishment to the wicked.

The closing chapters of "The Heart of Midlothian" perform excellently the services required of them in the economy of the older fiction, and even if the Duke of Argyle does play in rather too extravagant a manner the part of a fairy godfather, and although the transformation of Effie into a lady of fashion and the fates of her husband and her son might surely have been more succinctly presented, it is always possible for us to do a little skimming and always incumbent upon us to remember with gratitude the quite extraordinary powers of characterization and narration lavishly displayed in what may fairly be called the story proper. And if, O rigid reader, you refuse to make these allowances in the case of "The Heart of Midlothian," pray tell me whether you consistently decline to make them in the case of the closing portion of "Vanity Fair"?

As to the characters, Jeanie and her father, Douce David Deans, are among Scott's very best, and they would be a credit to Balzac.

Douce David is more thoroughly analyzed than Mause Hedrigg in "Old Mortality," but he is not on that account or on any other more effective. Nevertheless he plays his part well, and as for the elder daughter, even "Old Mortality" itself can show no such noble central figure. To appreciate her is an education—especially in the essentials of democracy. Her lover, Butler, is perhaps not much more than exemplary, and that amusing wooer, the Laird of Dumbiedikes, may verge upon a caricature, as may also that wordy ass, Mr. Bartoline Saddletree. Effie is well sketched, and Jemmie Ratcliffe is a really masterly minor personage. Madge Wildfire is striking enough to make it at least possible to argue that she is the creation of a vivid and truly dramatic imagination; but certainly her mother and Effie's lover, George Staunton *alias* Robertson, are not without a touch of melodrama. And I have said nothing of Mrs. Saddletree, Plumdamas, Mrs. Howden, Miss Damahoy, Sharpitlaw and other characters, who illustrate Scott's humor, his knowledge of human nature, and above all that lavishness of genius which is one of the characteristics that link him with the master-writers of the world.

The narrative from the second to the fortieth chapter needs fewer apologies than we have to make for most of our older novelists. The

Porteous Riot fixes our attention upon the Tolbooth, the unruly populace of Edinburgh, and the harsh laws and ill-repressed passions of the epoch, and we are thus prepared to watch with sympathetic interest the development of the tragic drama of which the frail and beautiful Effie Deans is at first the central figure. Perhaps here and there a modern novelist would knit his threads more deftly, but, take it on the whole, the first half of the story moves steadily and impressively onward. For more than a hundred pages, let us say, from the twelfth to the twenty-fifth chapter, it would be difficult, I think, to point to any better manifestation of the varied powers that go to the production of great fiction. And it is needless to say that the good chapters do not cease with those that set before us so forcibly the trial in which Jeanie will not deviate a hair's breadth from the truth even to save her sister's life. Jeanie's preparations for her journey, her interview with Dumbiedikes, her parting with Butler—all this is admirably done; and equally admirable are the chapters that describe her interviews with the Duke of Argyle and with the Queen. Whether her adventures with the thieves, and in the rectory of Mr. Staunton, maintain so high a level may very well be doubted, and, as we have seen, it is not every-

body now-a-days who is likely to be interested in the later chapters—in the descriptions of Douce David's controversies with Duncan of Knockdunder or in such an episode as the forcible installation of Mrs. Dutton in the shallop. This episode serves, however, to remind us that, even if the interest does flag here and there in not a few of the novels that have been handed down to us as classics, it is always possible to trained minds to receive instruction and entertainment from books which have satisfied the needs and desires of several generations of readers, and to perceive in such works clear proofs of the progress the human mind is steadily making toward its uncomprehended goal. The somewhat unexhilarating description of Mrs. Dutton's vain endeavors to avoid entrusting her tender person to the mercies of the waves, reminds us how far, even in Scott's day, British fiction had advanced beyond the coarse horse-play of Sir Walter's fellow-countryman, Dr. Tobias Smollett.

III

SPENSER

[Prepared as an Introduction to an edition of Spenser's Works, published by T. Y. Crowell & Co., in 1903.]

I

Of Spenser, more than of most other famous writers, it may be plausibly said that he can gain very little from new appreciations of his genius. Not only has a great mass of criticism been heaped upon his works—although he has apparently fared better in this respect than his three compeers, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton—but it is entirely superfluous to say a word in his favor to his admirers, and almost a forlorn undertaking to try to win over to him unappreciative or totally indifferent and neglectful readers. Like his greatest disciple, Milton, Spenser suffers from the defects of his qualities; and, perhaps even more than in the case of "Paradise Lost" the reading public, so far as his chief work, "The Faerie Queene," is concerned, contents itself with that method of sampling which to a poet is almost as much an insult as it is an involuntary tribute. His "Epithalamion" and his "Prothalamion" are familiar to lovers of poetry, but nothing that he wrote has the currency of Milton's so-called Minor Poems. Hence, in the popular mind, Spenser is less near than Milton to Shakespeare's throne,

perhaps less near than Chaucer—although, more probably on account of his archaic diction, he is usually grouped with Chaucer in a relationship of vague and antiquated greatness.

When a truly eminent poet is placed in such a position, his upholders become as a rule all the more intense in their devotion and, in proportion, all the more scornful of the taste and critical capacity of the large world of readers. And nearly always neither party is wholly wrong or wholly right; indeed, it is fairer to say that each party has a good deal of right and truth on its side. In the case of Spenser, no idealist, no sensitive lover of ethereal beauty, no reader endowed with an ear trained to take delight in the subtlest melodies and most exquisite harmonies, no dreamer enamored of the stately and romantic past, no willing prober of allegories and symbols, and, above all, no soul in love with essential purity can possibly remain indifferent to the appeal made by the poet and, to a considerable degree, by the man. For any reader, falling to a fair extent under these categories, to know Spenser at all thoroughly is to love him deeply.

But idealists, symbolists, ethereal natures, and readers trained to enjoy the subtlest poetic harmonies have always been rare. This is a work-a-day world actuated by a rather overpowering sense of the real. The Middle Ages

developed in what was after all a very limited class of men and women, a taste for allegory; but the great national dramas killed allegory, and this beneficent result was really involved in the invention of printing and in the consequent widening of the reading public, as well as in the recovery from classical times of better literary models. When Spenser decided, against Gabriel Harvey's advice,[1] to abandon the writing of comedies and to continue the composition of "The Faerie Queene," he probably made no mistake, so far as concerned his own genius and the world's profit; but he unwittingly took his hand from the latch of the gate opening into the future. The gate he opened and entered admitted him into the past; but his good genius led him along a path that speedily emerged into the enchanted meads and vales of Faeryland. Shakespeare, on the other hand, without Spenser's advantages of training and connections, but perhaps profiting from his predecessor's choice, opened the gate of the future. He too at times strayed into Faeryland, but never for long. Hence it is that Shakespeare continues to make an increasingly triumphant progress down the highway of time,

[1] Professor J. B. Fletcher has cautioned us to remember that, as Harvey praised the "Faerie Queene" of 1590, "we may presume a radical recasting" after 1579.

while Spenser pursues his enchanted wanderings. It would be rash to undertake to determine which fate is the more enviable.

It is just as easy to account for the interest taken in Spenser by scholars as to explain the devotion of his admirers and the comparative neglect of the large public. He was the first poet of sustained eminence produced in England for nearly two centuries after Chaucer's death. He was the first poet to profit in full measure from the Renaissance, from the Italian masters and from their less successful but still important French followers, from the labors of Wyatt and Surrey, and from the admirable and not sufficiently esteemed beginnings made by Sackville. He added to the rich color and melody of Southern poetry not merely that "high seriousness" and philosophic depth of the best Greek classics (which had also affected the Italians), but the profound spiritual sincerity and the sense for the mysterious and the symbolic, which are characteristic of the Teutonic genius. He was in many respects a marvelously full and ripe product of the Renaissance, but he was also a product of the Protestant Reformation, yet at the same time an exponent of many of the finest ideals of the Middle Ages. In him cohere to a remarkable degree the interest attaching to the survivor and that attaching to the pioneer.

When in addition to these facts we remember that Spenser was an important figure in the most brilliant and picturesque age of English history and literature, that he was the contemporary of Sidney and the predecessor of Marlowe and Shakespeare, that he was as clearly, although not so eminently, supreme in narrative, idyllic, philosophical, and loftily lyrical poetry as Shakespeare was in the drama, and that he was the master of an important group of seventeenth-century poets, including the brothers Fletcher and William Browne and culminating in Milton, we should be prepared to wonder not that so much scholarly study has been devoted to him and his works, but that he has not attracted an even larger number of editors and critics. Nor do these considerations take into account the interest Spenser's language, affectedly and factitiously archaic though it often is, must possess for philologians, or that less commendable interest which attaches to the endeavor to solve such problems as the identification of the Rosalinde of "The Shepherd's Calendar," or the elucidation of some obscure court intrigue apparently glanced at in this or that canto of "The Faerie Queene."

But while it is not necessary to commend Spenser's poetry either to scholars or to select readers, and while it would be futile to com-

mend it in the hope that it will ever be truly popular, it does seem worth while to combat the notion that when read in any quantity his verse is necessarily tedious. This widely prevalent notion, combined with the idea that Spenser's archaisms make him very difficult to understand, doubtless renders the naturally contracted circle of the great poet's admirers still more contracted. The doubt is periodically expressed whether anyone can read all that we have of "The Faerie Queene" except for the sake of being able to say one has read it, or for some other absurd or pedantic reason. People quote Macaulay's phrases about being in at the death of the Blatant Beast without being aware, any more than he seemingly was, that that formidable monster made his escape, and is, for aught we know, still roaming the world. Lovers of Spenser reply, of course, by enlarging upon their own fortunate experiences among the enchanted if tangled thickets of the great allegory, but they generally encounter a polite skepticism.

II

The chief cause of this divergence of opinions seems to lie in the fact that detractors of "The Faerie Queene" demand that it should interest them, while its lovers are satisfied with

being charmed and ennobled by it. The latter, if we may trust Schopenhauer, are the more philosophical, since it is rapture rather than interest that we should demand of a true work of art. But while it is not difficult to read a comparatively short poem like the "Prothalamion" for rapture only, it is difficult to set aside the demand for interest in the case of a very long poem consisting of one or more narratives, whether or not those narratives be allegorical in character. In other words, Spenser was unwittingly his own enemy when he began his poem with the line:—

"A gentle knight was pricking o'er the plain."

Another sort of pricking immediately became inevitable—that is, of the reader's ears. A narrative, whether in prose or verse, at once suggests a story, and a story suggests the craving for interest.

Is "The Faerie Queene" interesting? As a whole, it seems not to be. Some readers cannot follow the wanderings of Una and the Red Cross Knight to their successful issue. Others can do this and can even manage to accompany Guyon until he overthrows the Bower of Bliss, although it may be doubted whether many of these, in gratitude for the great seventh canto describing the Cave of Mammon, are able to

finish the tenth canto with its "Chronicle of Briton Kings, From Brute to Uthers rayne." Those who finish the second book can probably trust themselves to embark upon the third—"The Legend of Britomartis, or of Chastity"; and there seems to be no special reason why such should not survive the uneven fourth book, and the better-knit fifth and sixth books containing, as the latter do, respectively the lofty legend of Artegall and his Iron Man, Talus, and the lovely cantos describing the passion of Calidore for the fair Pastorella. Readers who leave the Blatant Beast raging "through the world againe" ought to be sufficiently initiated Spenserians to be delighted that the "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie" were discovered and given to the world in the folio of 1609; yet few critics, with the exception of Aubrey De Vere, have done these noble cantos justice.[1]

[1] In *Macmillan's Magazine,* Vol. XLII., Mr. Sebastian Evans argued that by 1596, the date of the collected "Sixe Bookes," Spenser had changed his mind as to the scope of his poem, and that the "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie" and the two stanzas were not intended to be incorporated in "The Faerie Queene." Dr. Grosart seems to have disposed of the first contention (Vol. I., Appendix U), but the second point is left open for argument. Certainly it is hard to see how Spenser could have worked the two cantos into the scheme of his poem, and it is clear that in no other cantos are we so completely separated from human actors—from the brilliant knights and ladies in whom the

But our question has not been altogether answered. "The Faerie Queene" is probably not interesting throughout to anyone—what long poem is? many will ask,—but at least one reader has found himself confessing at the end that there is enough sheer interest in the poem to make him wonder at Spenser's copiousness of invention. Passages that drag do occur with some frequency, and it requires all the beauty of the marriage of the Thames and the Medway to make one hope for the triumphs of art one finds in the fifth and sixth books that follow. Nor is flagging of invention the only drawback. Confusion worse confounded results, not merely from the fact that the central conception of the poem can be understood only from Spenser's

poet's imagination took such delight. Practically the best way to treat the Cantos is to regard them, in Mr. Evans's words, "as one of the noblest independent poems of the noblest age of English poetry." But do not the lines that open the thirty-seventh stanza of the first canto almost settle it that Spenser intended to join these cantos to the main poem?—

"And were it not ill fitting for this file
To sing of hilles and woods mongst warres and *knights*."

Besides, each canto is provided with the slightly doggerel epitome that is found before every canto of "The Faerie Queene." Yet, after all, it is perhaps more important to notice the plain influence of the "Two Cantos," themselves influenced by Bruno's "La Bestia Trionfante," upon Keats's "Hyperion."

letter to Raleigh, but also from the poet's having borrowed from Ariosto the trick of taking up and dropping his threads of narrative, his separate adventures, in order to pique the reader's curiosity. This confusion is enhanced by mistakes made in consequence, it would appear, of lapses of memory. Worse still at times seems the mixture of ideal and of realistic elements —of allegory intended to elevate the souls of men and of allegory devised to flatter Elizabeth, Leicester, and Lord Grey of Wilton. Combats of knightly heroes with dragons and proud Paynim foes do not well harmonize with thinly veiled descriptions of actual combats waged by Henry IV. and Philip II., much less with a partisan impeachment of Mary Queen of Scots and a grotesquely falsified version of Leicester's campaign in the Low Countries. Yet, when all deductions have been made, it seems not impossible to forget that one is reading an allegory, and to interest one's self in the fortunes of nearly all Spenser's characters, even if one does not quite hold one's breath when a dragon or some other monster gets a hero-knight into a decidedly uncomfortable predicament.

Yet why dwell on this matter of interest when "The Faerie Queene" has so much that is higher and better to yield us? Is it not, with the possible exception of "Comus," the purest

of English poems? Is it not the most continuous stream of fluid melody ever poured into the ears of men? Is there in English a poem fuller of descriptive power, varied, copious, and charming? Is there a poem more truly philosophical, yet at the same time more completely the product of a sustained poetic imagination? Finally, is there any other long poem in English that comes nearer than "The Faerie Queene" to the consummate art of "Paradise Lost"?

The answers to most of these questions are scarcely matters of debate. The exquisite purity of Spenser's entire poetical work has long been admitted. Una is the quintessence of purity, but she has many almost equally spotless sisters. Spenser's knights are not suffered to escape the temptations of lust, nor is their creator insensible to fleshly charms; but it may be safely said that there is only one stanza in the long poem to which even the most prurient prude would be likely to raise objections. Whether the poem is not almost too pure, just as it is almost too sweet in its melodies and too uniformly fair and romantic in its coloring, is another matter. Perhaps the atmosphere of "The Faerie Queene" is too rarefied for many people, and perhaps this is the reason why Spenser has long appealed especially to poets and been known as "the poet's poet."

To enlarge upon the philosophical depth of Spenser's poetry, particularly of "The Faerie Queene" and of the four "Hymnes," would require both an entire essay and the assurance that one could add something to Mr. De Vere's excellent treatment of the subject. It must suffice to say that Spenser's poetry is as steeped in Platonism as it is in the more specifically literary spirit of the classics and the Renaissance. Here again may be found a reason for his failure to appeal to more or less realistic and positivistic readers like Byron, but surely the catholic mind should be receptive to his lofty idealism. The "sage and serious" teacher whom Milton set above professed philosophers has a message for this and for every generation, although he has not the power of the Ancient Mariner to compel attention. Nor is his teaching by any means always veiled in allegory. It is often brought out by his characters and by their actions as effectively as though he were really a dramatist or a novelist, and there is scarcely a canto that does not open with a stanza weighted with noble thought.

As for the sustained perfection of Spenser's poetic art in the broadest sense of the term, it is obvious that dogmatic assertions should be avoided; yet it is equally obvious that, on the whole, critical opinion has placed him among the

major poets of our tongue, and that this is never done save in the case of poets who are also sustained artists. It is Spenser's sustained art that places him with Shakespeare and Milton and Chaucer and separates him from Wordsworth and Byron and Shelley. That he is inferior in the totality of his powers to Shakespeare no one doubts. That he is inferior to Milton no one will doubt who gives due weight to the verdict of time or to the claims of sublime and succinct as compared with exquisite and diffuse art. For that Spenser is diffuse and often lacking in finish and, on the whole, gentle, pure, lovely, rather than sublime, in spite of the undeniable power displayed by him in the descriptions of the Cave of Despair and of the Cave of Mammon, seems indisputable. That the deficiencies of his work from the point of view of humor, archness, and vivid realistic power of characterization and description have tended to place him below Chaucer in poetic rank seems equally indisputable. Yet one may well refuse to institute invidious comparisons between such great masters, or may hold that neither Chaucer nor Shakespeare is Spenser's equal as a uniform, sustained, conscious artist.

Some critics, however, especially those who rely on formulas, are disposed to question Spenser's high rank as an artist, particularly

on account of the lack of unity they discover in "The Faerie Queene." Unity is a very indefinite word, and formulas are often misleading. There is probably little unity of action in the poem, save such as is really factitious; and such unity of substance and motive as it seems to possess might not stand the test of a searching analysis. We may admit that in order to be a great work of sustained art a poem must exhibit some sort of unity, but to demand of a product of the Renaissance the kind of unity we find in the masterpieces of classical times seems to be a procedure that is both unnecessary and unfair. Why is it that we ask for unity? Is it not for the sake of a certain feeling of satisfaction it produces in us? If so, and, if "The Faerie Queene" leaves upon some readers no sense of dissatisfaction, is it not rational to believe that it possesses unity of some sort for those readers? What sort of unity can that be? Surely, a unity of tone, of atmosphere, pervades it and renders it a harmonious whole to those who love it; and since we are the wealthier in proportion as our sources of enjoyment increase, it seems wise to stretch our critical formulas until they allow us to include "The Faerie Queene" among the world's great poems.

III

But the far from inconsiderable body of Spenser's lesser writings demands attention. His prose tract on Ireland and his letters may be dismissed, not because they are not valuable or interesting, but because Spenser is for readers of to-day primarily a poet. Of his minor poems, if the phrase be applicable, doubtless the most important to the student is "The Shepherd's Calendar." This was not the first English pastoral in point of time, but it was the first that made Englishmen feel that they possessed something in this once popular form not only equal or superior to anything of the kind that Italy or France could boast of, but actually worthy of comparison with the similar work of Virgil. Besides, it was the first English poem since the days of Chaucer, with the possible exception of Sackville's "Induction," that indicated sustained poetic mastery, especially in rhythm, on the part of its writer. It was at once and long popular, and it exercised considerable influence upon the Spenserians of the seventeenth century. Take it all in all, it is still probably the best collection of pastorals in our literature, and it retains not a little of its charm, although those modern readers who fail to

take deep interest in discussions as to the state of the church carried on in rustic language by clerical shepherds are not very greatly to blame. It is even conceivable that some persons may find the chief interest of the poem, outside the fables of the Oak and the Briar and the Fox and the Kid, to lie in the proofs it gives of Spenser's varied and admirable powers as a metrist, and that others may prefer to study it in connection with the work of Spenser's predecessors, especially of Marot, who may not, after all, be so completely our poet's inferior as some have thought.

A nobler and a wider appeal is made by those two supreme lyrics of their elaborate kind, the "Epithalamion" and the "Prothalamion." The rapture of approaching fruition and the awe that accompanies the contemplation of idealized perfection seem never to have been so perfectly blended by any other English poet as they have been by Spenser in his pæan for his own wedding. In outward form his poem was Italian, in substance and spirit it was the expression of his own loyal and ecstatic soul. Less of compelling rapture but more of artistically presented objective beauty is probably to be found in the "Prothalamion" which gains upon its companion poem in succinctness and perhaps in cer-

tain peculiar triumphs of cadence. Yet, after all, to prefer the "Prothalamion" to the "Epithalamion" is much like preferring the moon to the sun.

As compared with these two splendid luminaries, Spenser's "Amoretti" seem to constitute a sort of Milky Way. There is no need to compare his peculiarly constructed sonnets with the numerous rival sonnet-sequences of the epoch. They are obviously inferior to Shakespeare's, and just as obviously they yield no such impressive single poems as every admirer of Sidney can recall. They are excellent and sometimes more than excellent, but, as a whole, they scarcely seem to form a constellation of lyric stars. Whether as a sequence they rank above or below Sidney's may be a matter of doubt; it is scarcely doubtful that Drayton and Joshua Sylvester each has a single sonnet to his credit, neither of which would be exchanged by some readers for any of Spenser's sonnets.

As an elegist Spenser is not successful, as readers of "Daphnaïda" and "Astrophel" will probably admit. It is hard to see why in the latter poem he did not succeed better, in view of the fact that he had Sidney for a subject. It should be remembered, however, that this Elizabethan paragon is commemorated in two exquisite lines:—

> "Most gentle spirite, breathed from above
> Out of the bosome of the makers blis"

in "The Ruines of Time," a poem which contains some noble stanzas on the power of poetry to immortalize, and helps to convince the capable reader that nothing of Spenser's should be slighted.

Of the poems that remain briefly to be noticed that excellent combination of a satire and a beast fable, "Mother Hubberds Tale," has perhaps received most commendation from the critics. It undoubtedly deserves high praise, and it may be profitably compared with certain eclogues in "The Shepherd's Calendar." Its excellence should not, however, make us forget the descriptive power displayed in "Virgil's Gnat" and in that remarkable creation of pure fancy "Muiopotmos," which suggests comparison with Shelley's "Witch of Atlas." But better than these and fuller of true poetry than "Mother Hubberds Tale" is "Colin Clouts Come Home Againe," perhaps the most remarkable example in English of the blending, upon an extensive scale, of occasional and familiar with essential poetry. If it were only a tribute of friendship from Edmund Spenser to Sir Walter Raleigh, it would be notable; we should be glad to possess it if it gave us only the brilliant and interesting description of Elizabeth's court; but in addition it is full of pas-

toral beauty, and it contains a fairly superb picture of a gallant ship breasting the waves. One of its lines,

"Is Triton blowing loud his wreathed horne,"

suggests the thought that Wordsworth, who loved Una and "The Faerie Queene," must have read other poems of Spenser's with delight and profit.

Only one group of important lyrics remains to be mentioned—the four "Hymnes" in honor of Love, of Beauty, of Heavenly Love, and of Heavenly Beauty. These for some reason, while dear to a few readers of Spenser, have never seemed to take the rank among his writings that appears to be their due. Perhaps their philosophy and their theology are too pronounced, perhaps they are too subtly ethereal, too little appealingly human. Yet it might be plausibly argued that they present the philosophical mind and the equably soaring imagination of Spenser more completely than anything else he ever wrote save only the "Two Cantos of Mutabilitie." However this may be, no student of Spenser can afford to leave the "Hymnes" unread, and no lover of literature should with complacency admit the fact that he is not a student of Spenser. For not to study and love such a poet is a misfortune, although only a partisan would proclaim it to be a fault.

IV

THE RELATIONS OF HISTORY AND LITERATURE

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I

WHILE it is true that no one can to-day reasonably expect to achieve great success in any field of activity without a loyal and almost completely unswerving devotion to his chosen calling, and hence that few students are competent to deal authoritatively with more than one branch of knowledge, it is equally true and equally obvious that no subject of human inquiry stands in absolute isolation. It follows that students of one branch of knowledge will occasionally do well to hear from students of cognate branches discussions of points lying, if I may so express it, in the mark or boundary between the contiguous provinces of knowledge. Thus, for example, the student of history can learn not a little from the anthropologist, the archæologist, and the geographer. I hesitate to suggest, for reasons which will be abundantly clear as we proceed, that in these days of scientific history the student of that subject has much to learn from the student of literature; yet, as some old-fashioned people still think of history as a branch, and a very noble branch of literature, and as even the scientific historians them-

selves do not deny that the alliance between history and literature was extremely close not a hundred years ago, I venture to hope that some remarks on the relations of the two subjects may not be out of place at this annual gathering of many of those Virginians who are interested in the annals of their mother State.

Such Virginians are surely not insensible to the facts that the age of the heroic explorers and first settlers was also the greatest creative epoch in the literature of their race, that George Sandys translated Ovid on the banks of the river that flows past their present capital, that about the time Captain John Smith was sending over to London the manuscript of his "True Relation," the first English book written on American soil, the master dramatist of the world, at the very height of his powers, was depicting the passion, dire yet forever enrapturing, of Antony and Cleopatra. It was a fascinating history and a fascinating literature that were in the making three hundred years ago, and when a student of the one is not also and by that very fact a student of the other, the two should at least try to meet frequently on a common ground and report to each other their experiences.

But suppose our two students thus meeting should accost each other with the very natural

and appropriate questions—What is History? What is Literature? Is it not conceivable that their last state might be worse than their first? No one, to my knowedge, has ever succeeded in satisfactorily defining literature, and, to judge from the numerous attempts to define history, it is not clear that a consensus of opinion as to what their favorite study really is prevails to-day among historians, or, at least, that any such consensus has prevailed long enough to give it practical authority. We are continually told in the words of Lord Bolingbroke, which he thought he got from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, that history is philosophy teaching by example. This phrase is not inapt as a description of a certain type of classical historical writing—for example, the histories of Thucydides and Tacitus. "Political philosophy teaching by example" would perhaps characterize not unfairly Grote's massive "History of Greece." But apply the phrase to such a treatise as Stubbs's "Constitutional History of England" or to such a narrative as Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico," and it appears at once to be almost ludicrously inappropriate. Philosophy, it would seem, should be written by persons with a philosophical training and cast of mind; but our graduate schools for historical study, while they may prescribe a certain amount of French and

German, do not insist on any knowledge of philosophy as a prerequisite to successful work. The most famous definition or description of history is therefore seen to be much too narrow.

Lord Macaulay said, "that history, at least in its state of ideal perfection, is a compound of poetry and philosophy." This is delightfully vague. Cowper once got from the heel of an old shoe the suggestion for a fairly good poem; but if Stubbs had been alive and writing in Cowper's day, the amiable poet would have been sorely tasked if he had tried to extract any subject for poetry from the three most famous volumes of the eminent prelate-historian, unless, to be sure, he had written a satire upon the universal aridity of scientific history. "A compound of poetry and philosophy" indeed! Even Lord Macaulay's own fascinating "History" is not that for those of us who see in that famous work a good deal more than the rhetorical proclamation of the glories of English Whigism which some disdainful moderns have discovered in volumes declared by their fathers to be more interesting than most novels. What could Macaulay have found better to say of Milton's "Comus" than that it was a "compound of poetry and philosophy"? And what would he have said to Burke and Fox, who, arguing with the Duke of Richmond, maintained

that truth was to be discovered in poetry rather than in history? Those two eminent men, one of whom wrote history, evidently believed that poetry and history were somewhat antithetical. Finally, where is the rash man who will undertake to tell us what poetry is and what philosophy is?

But the distinguished persons I have been mentioning, save Stubbs, belong to what my friends of the present historical school are just too polite to call "The Dark Ages of Historiography." Let us descend the stream of time until we come to a Norman keep still in a fair state of preservation—I mean, in unfigurative language, let us pass on to the historian of the Norman Conquest, the late Mr. Edward Augustus Freeman, who, although he confined himself as closely to printed sources as he did to Saxon words and to prehistoric plainness of speech, will perhaps be accepted by the modern school as one of themselves. When I was a student of history at the Johns Hopkins University, my eyes were confronted each day with a sententious utterance of Mr. Freeman's which the late Professor Herbert B. Adams, whose loss we have had to deplore, had caused to be painted in large letters upon the wall of his seminary room and library, so that all who came to read might at least read that. "History is

past politics; Politics is present history"—that was the legend that stared us in our innocent faces. I thought then, and I still think, that Mr. Freeman was very hard on his favorite study. Man never has lived by politics alone. Some people have done it, some continue to do it; but they have run and still run great risk of becoming disreputable. The historian who confines himself to politics past and present is not disreputable; he is only one-sided and often one-eyed. Perhaps it is impolite to suggest that the reason political historians have so long exercised a sort of sway over readers of history becomes clear the moment we remember that the one-eyed man is king among the blind.

This finding flaws in definitions and descriptions is, however, a facile and a comparatively unprofitable operation. We are all convinced that there is such a study as history as well as a body of writings called historical, both of which we can separate in a rough and ready manner from chemistry, let us say, on the one hand and from the drama on the other. Such a definition as that given by "The Century Dictionary" suffices for most of our purposes. History, says that authority, is "the recorded events of the past, also, that branch of science which is occupied with ascertaining and recording the facts of the past." You as a historical society

are occupied with ascertaining and recording the facts of Virginia history. I, as a teacher of English literature, am occupied with introducing my students to the most important works in prose and verse in which the writers of our race have embodied their thoughts and feelings. Both history and literature as complex conceptions of the mind may entirely elude our respective efforts to define them; but we shall none the less continue to love and prosecute our chosen studies.

And sometimes a catholic-minded man applies himself to defining or describing our studies in such a way as to enlighten us—at least for the time being. When Professor C. H. Firth delivered his inaugural lecture at Oxford, he gave a description of history to which I personally take little or no exception. History seemed to him "to mean the record of the life of societies of men, of the changes which those societies have gone through, of the ideas which have determined the actions of those societies, and of the material conditions which have helped or hindered their development." Nor did history appear to him to be "only a branch of learning to be studied for its own sake, but a kind of knowledge which is useful to men in daily life, the end and aim of all history being, as Sir Walter Raleigh says, 'to teach us by example

of times past such wisdom as may guide our desires and actions.'"

Professor Firth went on to ask whether history is a science or an art, and he answered his own query by saying that to him "truth seems to lie between these two extremes. History is neither, but it partakes of the nature of both. A two-fold task lies before the historian. One half of his business is the discovery of the truth, and the other its representation."

These temperate words constitute a description of history broad enough, it would seem, to satisfy the most exigent. The historian of institutions, the historian of political events, the historian of manners, and the historian of the arts finds his respective and specific field of research included within the confines of history, as Professor Firth understands the term. Even the historian of literature may stand without shame beside the historian of battles and sieges. The writer of a minute, laborious monograph has a place as well defined as that of the author of a picturesque narrative or the bold generalizer in that rather nebulous study known as the philosophy of history.

II

But, unfortunately, temperate words are not usually welcomed by men flushed with victory,

and the scientific study of history has won so many triumphs in the past fifty or seventy-five years that its votaries have apparently been intoxicated by success and have become in consequence somewhat arrogant and intolerant. They speak with open disdain, not merely of former imperfect attempts to philosophize on the facts of history, but even of any present or future dream of such an attempt. They seem to view with an eye of grieved concern such of their number as are guilty of imparting to their writings the graces of style or display even a rudimentary sense for the picturesque and the dramatic elements of composition. Too frequently, when they have occasion to refer to the writers whom we are accustomed to denominate "the standard historians," they are contemptuous, when they are not insulting. Gibbon, indeed, they leave to the attacks of Mr. Ruskin and the ultra-orthodox—but Hume and Robertson, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Michelet they treat as proper targets for every sort of missile. When a spirit of compunction seizes them, they administer a *coup de grace* to their victim by declaring that he is merely a great writer whom they turn over to that useless but rather harmless freak, the critic of literature. Sometimes they are even scornful enough to ignore the very existence of the "standard historians." One of the ablest his-

torical students in this country confessed to me not long since that he had scarcely read one of them through in his life. He occasionally referred to their volumes, but got nothing for his pains. They did not know how to use their "sources," and my friend did, for he had been trained in the scientific school. Our conversation ended with the "standard historians" in eclipse for that evening at least, since it scarcely seemed worth while for me to make certain observations which I shall now venture to present.

Yet, after all, is it worth while for a single voice to lift itself in opposition to a chorus of self-satisfied and successful men who pause from their useful labors just long enough, it would seem, to sing their own praises and to chant the dirges of their unfortunate predecessors? Or is it worth while, instead of trying to drown their chorus, to ask them to pause and listen to a few questions?

Is not the sort of historical writing most in vogue to-day the result of a perfectly natural evolution from the credulous story-telling of Herodotus, for whom truth and fiction, history and poetry were but crudely differentiated, through the successful attempt of Thucydides to make a philosophic grouping of events in order to explain a catastrophe, on through the wider survey of peoples and their achievements

made by Polybius, through Livy's patriotic exposition of a nation's rise and progress, and through Tacitus's dark and partisan portrayal of an empire's shame and decline, through these famous narratives and others scarcely less famous to the works of feebler men in periods becoming darker and more confused, until history, like every other branch of learning, suffered, not extinction indeed, but a great and prolonged dimming of its light in the ages that witnessed the death of the ancient and the birth of the mediaeval world? Mixed with literature, mixed with philosophy, colored with patriotism, colored with partisanship, springing out of the darkness of unconsciousness, ending in the darkness of confusion, history obviously had little chance to grow into a science, though a spirit of investigation and a demand for truth were then abroad in the world, as well as a zest for speculation in philosophy. History in those days could not be very critical, though the narratives we owe to it are priceless even to-day, when inscriptions and coins often furnish us with safer data for constructing the story of the past than are given by the professed historians. But the mere encouragement of the spirit of inquiry, the spread of the love of truth, the fostering of national pride, the chastising of public and private vices—these services rendered by

history and historians were not small, and the development of the power of generalizing on events, of ordering a clear consecutive narrative, in a word, the laying of the foundations of the art of historical writing, might well be termed, by students at least, an inestimable service. History was a branch of literature, historians looking to one of the muses for their special protection, and the relationship was not then regarded as a cause for shame and should not now be considered as a proper subject for surprise.

If history could not become a science in classical times, it was still less likely to undergo such an evolution in the Middle Ages—the Ages of Faith. It suffered as literature did, as science did, and it could but slowly recover what it had lost as an art. With literature, however, and the other arts, it has left us materials out of which, after many centuries of neglect, scholars have been able to construct something that is not a caricature of one of the most interesting phases of human evolution. With the Renaissance came, of course, a greatly increased opportunity and desire to study the masterpieces of classical historiography, and writers like Machiavelli modeled themselves upon ancient historians. The mediaeval chronicle still survived, however, in the form of annals, and the earlier

modern historians like Lord Bacon showed through their uncritical method of handling their sources that the influence of the Ages of Faith was still upon them. Neither as a science nor as an art did history make much overt progress, the energies of men of learning being chiefly directed to the necessary amassing of linguistic and antiquarian knowledge, and men of letters still finding in the various forms of poetry the best medium of expression for their genius. But when at last the seventeenth century had laid the foundations of modern prose, especially in French and English, when it had stored up in great books of reference and in annotated editions of the classics the work of its herculean scholars and antiquaries, and when it had settled political and ecclesiastical questions to such an extent at least that national development on a broad scale was assured to some countries as a present possession and promised to others —after all these necessary steps had been taken, history as an art made, as might have been foreseen, a very rapid advance. Great Britain, to cite only one country, produced in the first half of the eighteenth century a number of writers who attempted, like Defoe, to give clear and consecutive accounts of political events, particularly such as had occurred since the Restoration —and during the second half of the century

Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon raised the writing of history to the level of a true art. At about the same time Johnson and Boswell performed a similar service for biography, and Richardson and Fielding for that form of fictitious biography and social history known as the novel.

It has recently been declared that it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that history in its modern sense was at its lowest ebb. Gibbon, to be sure, is not included in this extreme statement, because Gibbon was not only a great writer with a broad philosophical grasp and imaginative sweep, but also a great scholar endowed with zeal, patience, and critical sagacity. The reasons some members of the modern school are so hard on Gibbon's most distinguished contemporaries, seem to be two; first, because, owing to their want of zeal and critical acumen and to their lack of adequate collections of documents and the aids for using them, they produced books that are full of errors of fact; secondly, because they paid great attention to details of composition and took frequent occasion to generalize and philosophize on the meaning of events and movements with which they often had but a vague and narrow acquaintance.

III

These grave charges against the historians who preceded the critical German school of Niebuhr and Ranke are neither unfounded nor new. Dr. Johnson more than a hundred years ago pointed out as pithily as need be the essentially uncritical character of Lord Bacon's historical work, though he naturally thought more of his own contemporaries in the field of history than we are able to do; and not many years later Southey called Robertson a rogue because that exemplary Scotch divine had not read the laws of Alfonso the Wise before writing his famous introduction to his "Charles V." Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that, whatever Robertson's lapses from that zeal for accuracy which characterizes the best modern scholars, he was insensible to the necessity of gathering accurate historical materials; for, not only do his notes show a varied erudition, but he is represented in Boswell's "Tour to the Hebrides" as heartily agreeing with Dr. Johnson that steps should be taken to secure from every possible source information about the uprising of 1745.[1] Love

[1] It is hardly necessary to say that here and in other places in this paper I have profited from the erudition of the late Dr. Birkbeck Hill.

of truth and desire for accuracy were not born with Niebuhr and the Germans, but they have been made vastly more effective since nations have taken great pride in cherishing and rendering accessible their archives, since scholars have learned to co-operate, to apply the methods of study known loosely as critical and comparative, and to utilize not only the materials furnished by such practically new sciences as archaeology and anthropology, but also the example set by all scientists in their demand for a precise methodology, for a testing of results, and for an objective attitude toward their work. The moment we say this and realize what the total intellectual advance of the nineteenth century meant to the men engaged in any form of investigation, philological, literary, historical, scientific, we perceive how more than ungracious it is in those who are to-day profiting from the work of their own immediate forerunners to cast reproach upon the scholars of the eighteenth century who came between the colossal gatherers of erudite information that adorned the seventeenth century and the resolute wielders of a critical method that made memorable the nineteenth. If only one of the three great British historians of the eighteenth century could accomplish work permanent both from the point of view of literary art and from that of scientific

accuracy, all three helped on immensely the cause of history in one important respect.

They made it popular with the reading public because they brought it back to the standing as literature it had had in classical times. They showed men once more that it was possible to select and combine the multitudinous events of the past into picturesque and philosophical narratives. Two of them drew poorly and the colors they used have faded; but the art they practiced has lived on. Without their labors who shall say that one of the chief glories of our own literature would have been the great group of the American historians? Before Hume and Robertson wrote, Sir Robert Walpole in his retirement, when his son Horace proposed to read history to him, exclaimed, "No, don't read history to me; that can't be true." Some of Sir Robert's contemporaries like Defoe did their best to base their histories on authentic documents, but they were generally partisan and nearly always dull, and no one who knows them will blame the old statesman for not wanting to hear them read aloud. I cannot help believing, however, that, if he had lived a little longer, he might have listened to Hume's perversions of history, and reserved his objurgations until the sound of the polished periods had died away. It is, I repeat, no small achievement for the rep-

resentatives of any form of learning to gain the public ear.

It is plain that the attention thus secured has been held. History and biography have grown steadily in favor, until they may truly be said to be formidable rivals of poetry and fiction. There were few more popular writers in America than the late John Fiske at the time of his death. Macaulay, whatever his limitations, was and is widely read. Prescott, Motley, and Parkman won renown quickly, and even Bancroft, for all his rhetoric, was better known as a historian than as a statesman. And, what is perhaps more to the point, it has been found practicable to translate the massive works of great foreign historians such as Ranke and Mommsen. A similar story may be told of the fortunes of biography throughout the past hundred years. Though a writer like Matthew Arnold could still speak of history as that Mississippi of falsehood, readers with an increasing sense of the value of facts turned to it as perhaps the most satisfactory form of literature.

But whatever may have been the triumphs of literature during the nineteenth century—and they were undoubtedly great—it is plain that the triumphs of science were greater. If we were to use the phrase "the age of Tennyson" we should refer merely to an important but not

consummately great epoch of English literature; but if we used the phrase "the age of Darwin," we might legitimately be supposed to refer to the most important age of scientific discovery in the entire annals of the human race. Now as the materials of history and biography are what we call facts, as facts must be verified, and, as the verification of facts implies impartial scrutiny and the employment of the best available methods of research, it follows that in a scientific age the spirit in which history is studied and the methods by which its materials are gathered, sifted, and arranged would inevitably resemble, so far as the differing natures of their respective materials would allow, the spirit and methods of the workers in the various fields of natural science. The rise and triumph of the modern critical or semi-scientific school of Niebuhr and Ranke was a phenomenon which might have been predicted as readily as the rise of artistic history in the eighteenth century and of historical writing of a strictly classical type in the sixteenth. The scientific article and monograph concerned entirely with the announcement of some new bit of scientific information or some modification or confirmation or refutation of a scientific theory was of necessity paralleled by the historical article and monograph having similar purposes and characteristics. And just

as scientific work was best done in well-equipped laboratories, especially in those connected with large universities, so historical work of the modern critical type was best done in connection with archives and libraries and by trained specialists occupying chairs in universities situated where books and documents could be most readily and most abundantly obtained.

There is much to be thankful for in all this, but I fail to see anything altogether wonderful in it, unless it be the extraordinary delusion that this quite explicable growth of the scientific school of historians gives that school the right to despise its predecessors and to fancy that its own success means the extinction of history as a branch of literature. We have been told recently that the writing of history has practically passed into the hands of the professors of history and that these have not the time to study the graces of style, in other words, to endeavor to make their books attractive to the public. They are to write as students of history for other students. I trust that this last statement will continue in a sense to be true; but I perceive no reason why students who write should not try to write well, or why students who read should not prefer and demand books worth reading, not merely for their substance, but for their style.

I cannot see why, if a knowledge of the larger matters of science and history is both interesting and beneficial to the public, there should not continue to be a need for writers capable of serving as intermediaries between the active workers in the fields of science and history and the world of readers. Huxley was such a scientific interpreter or intermediary, and Fiske, after more or less abandoning philosophy, held a similar position among historians. Neither was perhaps a worker, an investigator of a very high rank; both were literary men of considerable eminence. It is often taken for granted that it is impossible for the investigator and the eminent man of letters to be one and the same person. This assumption is unfounded. The combination was seen in Gibbon, and, if there has been only one Gibbon, it is equally true that there has been only one Shakespeare, one Milton, one Newton. Do dramatists and poets and scientists, however, cease on that account to strive to reach the highest position in their calling that is possible with the genius or the talents they possess? The modern dramatist, if he is sensible, will not imitate Shakespeare in a slavish fashion, but he will endeavor to interpret in the most effective way the life of his own times in accordance with the fundamental and venerable principles of dramatic art. He makes use

of every device of the modern stage; but he is none the less one of the numerous progeny of Æschylus. It seems to me that the true historian ought, in a similar fashion, to be glad to count himself one of the numerous progeny of Herodotus. The picture-frame stage of to-day with its electric lighting and elaborate machinery differs as much from the orchestra in which the two actors of Æschylus stalked on buskins and spoke their parts through masks as the methods employed by the modern historian to gather and sift his facts differ from those used by Herodotus. But still, after all these centuries, the prime purpose of the dramatist is to interpret life through human action exhibited on a stage, and the prime purpose of the historian is to give a record of the past through the medium of written words.

The dramatist who constructed plays only for the enjoyment of his fellow dramatists would be a laughing stock. Is the historian who writes history only for the instruction of his fellow historians any less a laughing stock? Leave the public out of your calculations, especially in this democratic age, and you are sure to come to grief—whether you are an artist, or a scientist, or a historian, or a political boss, or the head of a great corporation. If insensibility to the claims of the public brings no other loss to the

historian than that loss of knowledge of men and of sympathy with them which characterizes all persons of a preponderatingly academic type, the consequence will be sufficiently serious. Does the professor-historian of the present suppose that he can sit in his study year in and year out and construct from the card index to his notes a satisfactory account of Roman politics in the days of Cæsar and Cicero? If he does, I should like with all due modesty to advise him to take a few less notes and a little more interest in the politics of his ward, or else to cultivate his imagination by reading the great novels and plays in which political scenes are depicted, and to model his manner of presenting the results of his study upon that of the men of letters he is wont to contemn. Let him be as scientific as he can be in amassing his materials, but let him remember that if he divorces history from present life on the one hand and from literature on the other, he runs constant risk of committing blunders of every kind and degree—blunders of perspective, blunders in assigning motives, blunders in comprehension of details.

IV

Now what is the drift of these remarks if it is not toward a warning against the creation

among historians of what is called in other fields of activity a mandarin class or caste? In criticism, whether of literature or of the plastic arts, the past half century has witnessed too many attempts on the part of men of culture to hold themselves aloof as an elect body and to look down on the public as uncultivated and therefore incapable of passing judgment in matters literary and artistic. That the public is capable of applying the principles and rules of technical criticism no sane man would affirm, nor is it any more capable of testing accurately the statements contained in the histories and biographies it reads. But it is equally plain that the poem, the drama, the novel, the picture, the statue, the history, the biography that holds the attention only of men of letters, of artists or of historians has failed of the largest and highest purpose its author or creator can have—with the exception of his desire to serve the cause of truth, beauty and goodness—I mean the purpose of adding to the information, the moral elevation, and the aesthetic pleasure of the largest possible public—which is, after all, but the practical result of his desire to serve the cause of truth, beauty, and goodness. This means simply that the labors of the artist, the man of letters, even the scientist, ought not to be considered an end in themselves—that much at least of the

dignity of such labors comes from the fact that they advance the cause of civilization, that is, that they redound to the advantage of every living man and woman and of the generations yet to come. This is not to say that those labors of the scientist or of the historian which result only in experiments and researches and the writing of books and monographs in which the public can take no true interest are not necessary and highly creditable. Countless specialists working in their laboratories and libraries are needed to furnish the facts from which constructive minds may develop the inventions, the discoveries, the theories, and the works of art, which by fostering the emotional and intellectual capacities of the race make life better worth living. Thus, for example, the progress of history is undoubtedly dependent upon the labors of archivists, index-makers, collectors, archaeologists, antiquaries, writers of articles and monographs, and last but not least, of teachers of history and historical methodology, most of whom must live and die unknown to the larger world of readers, unhonored and uncomprehended save by their fellow workers.

They are engaged in the essential task of furnishing and fashioning the stones of which the edifice is to be composed. The architect will receive all or nearly all the praise, and in this fact

there is a certain injustice which is attributable, not to human ingratitude, but to the finite capacity of the mind for remembering details. These unapplauded workmen are sustained in their labors by their devotion to truth, by their love of their work, and by the sympathy and commendation of their fellow toilers. If, however, they imagine, as some of them seem to do, that the quarrying and polishing of stones—the discovery and presentation of historical details—is an end in itself worthy of benediction, they make, it would appear, a flagrant mistake. Their labors must result in an edifice or they are in vain. And the edifice must be well built, or shame rather than glory, loss rather than profit, will ensue. To drop my metaphors, history in any true sense of the word is not synonymous with historical research and the materials it furnishes. It is based upon these and in so far it has its affiliations with science; it is also indissolubly connected with literature, and with philosophy as the latter term is broadly understood, and in so far it has its affiliations with art and thought. It is well that this is so; otherwise one might be compelled to give assent to the clever generalization contained in Anatole France's question "Who does not know today that the historians preceded the archaeologists as the astrologers preceded the astronomers,

as the alchemists preceded the chemists, as monkeys preceded men?" Here a literary man has amusingly turned the tables on the gentlemen who abuse Robertson and Carlyle. The true "latter-day" scientists are the archaeologists—those amiable destroyers of Prescott's Aztec palaces and other historical creations; who will make the archaeologists seem old-fashioned, we need not venture to predict, especially if we concur with Professor Firth in believing that history is both a science and an art, and if we have confidence that these will continue to be two of the main foundation stones of civilization.

We are now prepared, I hope—not, indeed, to indicate with precision the relations between history and literature, for we gave up the attempt to define these many-sided studies—but to conclude that their relations need at no time be antagonistic and may often with advantage be friendly. Neither those students who hold that the historian's aim and methods must be entirely scientific nor those who confine the term "literature" to writings of an imaginative type can justly be said to take a catholic point of view warranted by logic and by experience. Almost from the earliest times an artistic presentation in written words of the record of man's achievements has given the pleasure that is de-

nominated literary; hence history has been rightly regarded as a branch of literature. For history to cease to be a form of literature would mean a loss to that great body of books which is probably the most important basis of the world's culture; it would also, as we have perceived, mean a loss to history itself through the inevitable narrowing of the historian's appeal to his fellow men and of his grasp upon the facts of life present and past. The historian must be more than a man of letters, for if his work is to endure he must be a scientific investigator; but in this respect he is no worse off than the dramatist, who, truly to succeed, must master both the art of the writer in verse or prose and the craft of the playwright, the man who fits an action for representation on a stage. Both history and the drama may be something other than literature; both in their best estate are literature. So it has always been; so, unless the needs and capabilities of the race change greatly, may it always be.

There are other aspects of this question that I should like to discuss, but my time is drawing to a close. It would be worth while to endeavor to show that much of the inaccuracy which is charged against historians is due to the fact that they are errant human beings and not to the methods of research and writing they employ.

A narrow-minded man will do injustice to the great figures of the past with whom he deals, whether or not he try to follow scrupulously every precept contained in that admirable compendium, "Introduction to Historical Studies," by Langlois and Seignobos. A skilled artistic historian, who is at the same time a partisan, will unintentionally disseminate errors which the labors of generations of scholars will not suffice to dispel. Milton's conviction that a noble life is the indispensable basis for every noble poem holds true, with modifications, of great history and great criticism, and, indeed, of every phase of man's dealing with his fellow man. Take, for example, the important matter of assigning motives for conduct. Will absolute accuracy with regard to the external features of our great Civil War enable any historian to describe that struggle satisfactorily, if he imputes motives and feelings to the leaders of either side which those who knew and fought with them cannot accept as characteristic of the men? Here, it seems to me, we have a common ground on which historians of all kinds can very profitably meet and join in a litany, "From hasty and prejudiced judgments, good Lord, deliver us." Mr. Hillaire Belloc, in a recent article entitled "Ten Pages of Taine," has apparently shown how misleading is the portrait that famous historian

painted of Danton; yet, in his paper, he constantly argues that Taine was deliberately trying to deceive his readers. Such a procedure suggests a man holding on to the coat of another in rapid motion, and, while he is tugging and calling "Stop thief!" endeavoring to pick the pocket of the coat he is clutching. I suppose that no honest biographer or historian will refuse to confess that he would willingly blot out many a line which he originally penned with all honesty of intention and under the conviction that he had exhausted every accessible source of pertinent knowledge. He has not grown more honest and perhaps he has received no specific new information of any importance; he has only grown wiser and more charitable through living, through fuller opportunities to study his fellow men. Historians do not willingly cheat themselves and their readers, as one might infer to be their unhappy custom, if one were to rely upon the charges and innuendoes of their hostile, self-assertive critics; but they sometimes seem to make statements loose enough to warrant Carlyle in speaking of history as "a distillation of Rumor." They would surely escape many such errors if they would resolutely avoid the imputation of motives and also if they would suppress to a fair degree their own egotism.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say in conclusion that I have no desire whatsoever to disparage the importance of individual research and publication on the part of scientific students of history or to minimize the value of the work being done by the historical societies established in every State old enough to be interested in its past. Let us have the acute papers and monographs by all means, let us have the collections of documents and the volumes of proceedings, but let us also have strong corporate and individual efforts to make possible the writing of dignified historical books and the spread of a love of history throughout the masses of the people. If history is a science to be prosecuted by professors and a few students and to be caviare to the public, I wish it and them all success; but I cannot perceive any very solid ground on which State appropriations and individual benefactions can be demanded or requested in order that the scientists may pursue their studies under the best auspices. But if, as I have tried to show, history is not only a science but an art; if it is a branch of literature, and as such an important factor in the culture of the people at large, then it seems to me that we are all scientific students of history, writers of historical narratives, philosophical historians, and readers of history and biography, co-workers in one of

the noblest of all tasks—the task of preserving the memory of the deeds of our fathers for the encouragement and the warning of ourselves and our children and our children's children—to the end that civilization may be advanced and the ways of God be justified to men. The most sublime epic in all literature was written with this lofty purpose, to "justify the ways of God to men," and, whether or not the poet succeeded in his task, there can be but one opinion as to the transcendent importance of his undertaking. If the same lofty purpose is kept in view by all who deal with history, there will be fewer attempts to divorce that great study from literature, and every lover of his kind will be impelled to bid godspeed to every laborer in either field.[1]

[1] Since this address was delivered and first printed, I have had the pleasure of reading Mr. William E. Foster's very instructive monograph, "The Point of View in History" (Worcester, 1906; reprinted from the Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society). Any reader interested in the general subject I have been discussing or in special phases will be likely to find examination of Mr. Foster's erudite pamphlet both helpful and entertaining.

V

THOUGHTS OCCASIONED BY THE BICENTENARY OF DR. JOHNSON

[Printed in *The Nation* for September 16, 1909.]

I

I SUPPOSE that I ought to begin this brief paper with Lichfield and the 18th day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and nine, where and when the subject of what some persons regard as the greatest of all biographies was born into a world not soon likely to forget him. For reasons of my own, I wish to begin it at Oxford, and at a much later period. It is almost superfluous to say that there is scarcely another town of its size that calls up before the mind of a sojourner such a host of distinguished names as Oxford can summon from out the past. Keble, Pusey, Newman, with Shelley for a counterpoise; Burne-Jones and Morris and Swinburne and Arnold and Pater, Freeman and Froude and Stubbs—these are names that come to me almost at random, and they are all comparatively modern. Probably a true latter-day Oxonian could not have written the preceding sentence without inserting the name of Jowett. I am not myself enough even of an adopted Oxonian, despite many profitable hours I have been permitted to spend in the Bodleian, to venture to make a list, however short, of typical Oxford men whom every true son of

the university should honor. All I am competent to do is to say that, whenever I go to Oxford, one great personality emerges from the unending file of its notable sons, and stands apart for my imagination with a peculiar and extraordinary impressiveness.

II

Why is it that my thoughts and my feet always turn first to Pembroke College? Johnson said that in his day it was a nest of singing birds, but I am afraid that the good Doctor knew very little about singing. With Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Gray, Wordsworth, Byron, and Tennyson enrolled among the sons of Cambridge, it seems to be as plain as anything can be in the realms of taste that the university on the Cam has a decided advantage over Oxford as a nursery of songsters. If I were in a pessimistic mood with regard to the present and future of British poetry and wanted to walk among bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang, I should certainly desert the banks of the Isis for those of the rival river, and I should not need to reëxamine the contentious poems of Thomas Warton and William Mason before making my choice. But Oxford has enough great poets of its own to render so invidious a

comparison unnecessary, and, as the seat of poetic charm, the nursery of poetic idealism, has this home of lost causes any real rival among institutions of learning?

Dr. Johnson, however, was not a poetic or a charming personality, and he was far from being a representative idealist. The spell of the Middle Ages hangs about Oxford; Johnson is usually considered to have been a typical product of the eighteenth century. Oxford has been the *alma mater* of some of the greatest writers and scholars England has produced; it is open to doubt whether Johnson was a great writer at all, and the quality of his scholarship was hardly commensurate with its wide range. Even in those features of his character in which the stamp of his university is most clearly seen—his devotion to lost causes and his reverence for the Established Church—Johnson seems less memorable than many another Oxford man. We naturally associate the great lexicographer with the metropolis he so dearly loved, and probably many a modern reader who has a fairly clear idea of his personality would be puzzled to tell offhand which university he attended, or whether he received any sort of formal academic education. Why in the name of all that is reasonable should Dr. Johnson dominate the mind of any sojourner in Oxford?

III

That he does dominate other minds than mine was proved for me a few years ago by a chance encounter with a fellow American in the smoking room of a small Oxford hotel. The source of my agreeable compatriot's income, if I recollect aright, was that useful metal, copper; the source of his chief delights was Boswell's "Life of Johnson." He carried about with him a handy edition, but he also carried enough of his favorite book in his head to astonish such reticent Britons as he could manage to engage in conversations having his hero for theme. I am inclined, however, to think that the average American visiting Oxford does not pack Boswell alongside of Baedeker. Doubtless Johnson's uncouth, portly form recedes from the imaginations of most visitors, native or foreign, a few moments after they have lost sight of the memorials of him preserved at Pembroke College. For one person who in his mind's eye sees him haranguing his fellow students in a threadbare gown or tossing away the new shoes put in charity at his door, there are probably dozens who, as they move along the narrow streets or make excursions into the adjoining country, repeat to themselves phrases from Arnold's pref-

ace or lines from "Thyrsis" and "The Scholar-Gypsy." Any person likely to wonder whether Johnson ever returned to the library of Pembroke the copy of Lobo he trudged so many miles to borrow is still likelier to know the obvious facts in the case from Birkbeck Hill and to refrain from making inquiries. Scores or hundreds of people go to Oxford yearly in order to manifest their veneration for Newman or Pusey; how many really venerate Johnson's memory there or anywhere else? Certainly in no place connected with that memory will one see three spinsters standing in such dense awe as enveloped, one September afternoon, three mute worshipers at the Shelley shrine attached to University College. Those ladies—my countrywomen, I think—bent their eyes, now on the recumbent marble form, now on the star-spangled vault, now on their note-books, and I could not help wondering what use there would be in erecting memorials of questionable taste if there were not a fairly constant number of sentimental persons ever eager for a chance to wreak their emotions. It would be as easy, however, to sit comfortably on a barbed-wire fence as to wreak one's sentimentality over Dr. Johnson or anything connected with him.

IV

But sentimentalists are not my game, and it is scarcely necessary to add that my reference to those three spinsters I once encountered casts no reflection upon intelligent admirers of a poet whose genius in the sphere of essential lyric poetry is almost unrivaled. What I am bent upon is to determine the reasons why, whenever nowadays I stand upon or approach a spot connected with him, the burly doctor's form fills up, if I may so phrase it, the landscape of my imagination. I have never been to Uttoxeter, but, save St. Giles, Cripplegate, where Milton lies, there is scarcely another spot in England that could make more impression upon me than the market-place in the little Staffordshire town where Johnson, by standing in the rain on the site of his father's book-stall, expiated a youthful act of disobedience. That was surely not a heroic feat; from some points of view it was rather a foolish one. If the late Earl of Beaconsfield, or one or two American politicians who shall be nameless, had performed it, I should have been among the first to call it theatrical. In Dr. Johnson, it seems to be a pathetically impressive act of true filial piety, with the elements of sentimentalism and self-display eliminated.

Why do I dissociate from Johnson whatever is merely spectacular, and why does the epithet "impressive" present itself spontaneously whenever I think or write about him? Loyal Johnsonian though I hope I am, I cannot but admit that he was little of a poet; that as a biographer he was surpassed by his follower, Boswell; that he was not the greatest of British scholars; that, although the soundest and sturdiest critic of his day and still unrivaled in his common sense and probity save possibly by Dryden, he was not a very philosophical and acute judge of literature; that as an essayist in the strict sense of the word he fell far short of his predecessor, Addison; that as a writer of fiction, despite the solid merits of "Rasselas," he is not to be compared with Defoe, or Fielding, or Richardson, or even with Goldsmith; that as a moralist he could well have afforded to exchange some of his wholesome sententiousness for a little genial persuasiveness; that as an editor of Shakespeare he was lazy and somewhat slovenly; that, finally, even as a lexicographer he was not entirely above reproach. Undoubtedly, the Dictionary was a great achievement, and so was the "Lives of the Poets," but, when he endeavored to tread the higher walks of literature, his gait, to say the least, was unsteady. The author of the "Life of Richard Savage" was also the author

of "Irene," a tragedy which I have not ventured to re-read within the past twenty years. We may smile approvingly at Garrick's epigram to the effect that Johnson had beat forty Frenchmen and would beat forty more—we may add that he browbeat a much larger number of Englishmen; but we must admit that, when every allowance is made for his writings, they bulk small indeed in comparison, for example, with those of his great French contemporary Voltaire.

I value personally "Rasselas" and the "Lives," "The Vanity of Human Wishes," "London," the stanzas on Levett, and some of the impromptu verses, many of the essays in "The Rambler" and "The Idler," the prefaces to the Shakespeare, and the Dictionary, numerous letters besides the famous one to Chesterfield, and, last but not least, the prayers and meditations. I value these, and I have reason to believe that in over twenty years of teaching I have helped to make others value them. But with all my admiration for Johnson, I must admit that he left behind him after a long life a very small amount, perhaps too small an amount, of excellent literature to serve as the basis of an imposing and enduring fame. His concrete achievements are neither numerous nor of an exceptionally high order of merit. Even in his

own club he was surpassed as a writer by Goldsmith, Gibbon, and Burke—perhaps by Boswell, too—and he obtained in no single line, save as a talker, the preëminence of Garrick and Sir Joshua. Can it be that, after all, those persons are right who maintain that Johnson was not truly great save in his capacity as the Ursa Major of Gray—Gray the true poet, sensitive lover of nature, charming letter-writer, and splendid scholar, to whom Johnson devoted the very worst of all the "Lives"? Can it be that they are right in asserting that the Cham of Literature would not live in our memories to-day, had he not, most inconsistently, allowed his little Scotch friend to toady him?

V

That these hostile critics of Johnson are partly justified in their contentions cannot well be denied. If Hawkins's biography had remained the standard, if the literary dictator had overawed into silence or nervous prostration Mrs. Thrale and Miss Burney, if he had used on Boswell's obsequious head the club he bought for Macpherson's, it is scarcely open to doubt that not one educated person out of a hundred would be greatly interested in Johnson in this his bicentennial year, or would be familiar with his peculiarities and not ignorant of his works.

On the other hand, it may be argued that, while it is Boswell who has really made Johnson known in detail, it is Boswell and the infirmities of human nature that have obscured for many readers the essential greatness of Samuel Johnson's character. Is our ability to quote a man readily and to see in imagination the veins swelling on his forehead as he gulps his tea any proof that we really comprehend his personality? Is not our interest in biographical gossip often satisfied at the expense of our appreciation of a life and character in their totality? In the case of the famous Doctor, do we sufficiently realize the fact that in the years before Boswell's narrative becomes copious, Johnson, through sheer mental and moral force and through solid acquirements, rose from obscurity to comparative eminence, overcame poverty and physical defects that would have daunted most other men, maintained a stanch independence even in Grub Street itself, cherished his old mother and his scare-crow wife, made himself, as his means permitted, the almoner of the distressed, and finally became the commanding central figure of a group of exceptionally able men? Did Johnson dominate such men as Burke and Goldsmith and Reynolds and Garrick and Gibbon merely because he was a very gifted talker of exceedingly bad manners? Were his pension and the

interview with George III, that so flattered his loyal soul, due in the main to his political recalcitrance and his ecclesiastical obfuscation? Could Boswell's biography, as I have more than once had occasion to ask, possibly have been such a great book, had not its subject been a very great man? Has the English race in its entire history produced many personalities as robustly and wholesomely impressive as that which emerges when Boswell's biography and Johnson's own works are thoroughly read and not merely skimmed?

No one who will take the trouble to answer these questions—not hastily, but after some reflection and perhaps some refreshing of his memory—will be likely to be seriously indignant with me when I confess that, with John Milton set aside, I can think of no Englishman for whom I have a greater real veneration than I have for Samuel Johnson. Whatever he was or was not, one thing at least he was—a man!

VI

MILTON AFTER THREE HUNDRED YEARS

[An address delivered at Columbia University on December 9, 1908, at the exercises in honor of the three hundredth anniversary of Milton's birth.]

I

I HAVE been asked to address you on Milton as a man of letters, and there is one sense of the phrase that is entirely applicable to him. He is a man of letters because he did his work almost solely through the medium of the written word, because he had an extraordinarily high sense of the value of literature, and because, as a rule, whenever we think of him, we incline to think of him as a writer. If, however, in using this phrase "man of letters," we tend to regard Milton as a professional author, as a man whose chief ends were literary in the more technical sense of the word, who won the favor of the public by a ready, and versatile, and capable pen —in short, if we group him with such men, for example, as Pope and Washington Irving and Thackeray, we make a mistake, whether or not we do him an injustice. The reading public, as we understand it, scarcely existed in Milton's day; the commercial, the practical side of the art of literature did not greatly count; Milton, from first to last, was hardly a copious and versatile writer; and he looked upon his art rather as a sublime mission than as a dignified calling. As a matter of fact, we seem to run the risk of mis-

apprehending what he was and did if we speak of him as a man of letters or a poet or an author. We probably come nearer to describing him correctly when we say that he was a great character whose chief medium of expression was poetry and controversial and expository prose.

If such a description of Milton were generally borne in mind, critics and readers and the large public would, in my judgment, be saved from many mistakes, and Milton would gain both in reputation and in influence. A great character—much more, one whom some persons regard as the noblest ever produced by the Anglo-Saxon, not to say the entire human, race—a great character ought to be studied in all his works and in his life, because, being his life and his works, it is scarcely possible that they should fail to reveal his manifold greatness, or that that greatness should fail to exert an elevating influence upon us. Yet how often, even in biographies of Milton, in essays upon him, and in histories of English literature, are the prose tracts which represent his life and ideals and achievements between his thirty-third and his fifty-third years, during one of the most momentous and interesting periods of English history, how often are these tracts, which present with unparalleled eloquence the very form and pressure of the mature man and of his time,

treated in a scanty and perfunctory fashion, or dismissed with the censure of the sciolist? Again, if we conceived of Milton primarily as a great character, we should not be so tempted as many are to consider him solely in his capacity as poet-artist and to forget the part he has played as an emancipator of the mind. We might still leave him and his works standing apart in their remote grandeur, but I fancy we should not do it so complacently as we now do under the impression which critics and teachers have done their best to foster, that he is above all things a poet, and in that respect very difficult and inaccessible—not to say unhuman.

But I am expected to address you on Milton as a man of letters. Does that mean that I am come to help to bury him deeper, not to praise him! How could I manage not to praise him when for years he has meant more to me personally than any other man or writer has ever meant? What though the turbulent age in which he lived seems far removed from ours and as small as it is remote; what though, thanks to the spread of knowledge and, in particular, to the discoveries of modern science, we envisage an earth and a universe vastly transformed from those in which he battled for his ideals and dreamed his sublime dreams; what though many of the stars by which he steered his bark have

either disappeared from our heaven or been replaced by other guiding lamps; what though, amid this throbbing tumultuous present we stand amazed, new lights beaconing and new voices calling us on to the unknown, the fascinating realms that lie beyond; what though, atom as I am of this new, strange universe, I could not if I would, dissever myself from it, morally, mentally, or spiritually; am I not nevertheless subject, as you are, to that law of spiritual gravitation which is as far reaching and potent as its physical analogue, that law which forces me to seek out the noblest, the highest for me and, when found, to follow it and to bear testimony to it? And when, after using as best I could such faculties as I had, in seeing and hearing, in reading and reflecting, it was borne in upon me years since that for me the writer of writers, the man of men, the personality of personalities, was John Milton, then there was nothing left to do but, as it were, to preach him and his works whenever opportunity served.

II

Like most apostles, especially self-constituted ones, I have often been tempted to wish that I had been born under another star—under one that dwelt a little less apart. It was easy enough

to laugh when some Sewanee students of mine years ago adorned one spring morning the freshly whitewashed fences with an advertisement that read in staring crimson letters—"Take Trent's Miltonic for the brain." All that was needed, in the case of so excellent a specific, was to prescribe continued use. But it is not easy to maintain one's poise and calm when the god of one's idolatry is openly flouted, or when his temple is deserted for what one feels to be paltrier shrines, or when such worship as is accorded him seems too often to be of the lips only.

Despite the praise he has received for nearly two centuries and a half—almost hyperbolical praise in some cases—a note that resembles a cry in the desert is nearly always heard above the encomiastic chorus. "One man reads Milton, forty Rochester," so about two centuries ago wrote a would-be poet. The first part of the verse holds good to-day, but perhaps we should like to change the proportion, and we should certainly substitute another name for that of Rochester. Two centuries hence, when the five hundredth anniversary of Milton's birth is celebrated here, if anyone quotes and attempts to amend this verse, it is as certain as anything can be, that the name substituted for that of Rochester will not be the one you or I would

substitute to-day. But is it not possible for human ingenuity to surpass that of the bee and extract honey from thorns? Yes—these thorny proportions may be made to yield their drop of sweet consolation. The centuries roll by, and many names flash into glory only to sink into oblivion, but his name shines on with an intense and steady glow. He abides, even as the Alps abide, even as the sea, to the sound of which Wordsworth compared his voice. He has his audience fit though few—how fit let the names of Dryden, Marvell, Addison, Akenside, Gray, Collins, Cowper, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Landor, and Arnold testify—Miltonians all, and poets, who in their tributes to the master of their craft have but voiced the love and praise of thousands upon thousands of admirers, sincere though mute. Shall one be querulous and exigent in the presence of eternity, and is not Milton's fame eternal? How completely four lines of Tennyson make up for misplaced facetiousness and for ignorance which is slowly being dissipated:—

> O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
> O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
> God-gifted organ-voice of England,
> Milton, a name to resound for ages.

Milton was more than even Tennyson's lines import—he is almost worthy of the Horatian

Unde nil majus generatur ipso
Nec viget quidquam simile aut secundum—

but let us take the English tribute as it stands and be grateful for it. Let us be grateful also to time for smoothing away many rough places in our path. We can now read Johnson's unsympathetic life of Milton without echoing the mild Cowper's impulsive wish to thresh the gruff Doctor's old jacket. That article of apparel was sufficiently dusted by Macaulay half a century later. Yes—Milton abides and the Miltonian abides too, not as a parasite, but as a living exponent of the workings of that high law of spiritual gravitation. But, as men are creatures of varying aptitudes and capacities, it follows that we cannot all gravitate to the same spiritual mass or center. My center may not be that of my friend, but why should it be his stumbling-block? Is it not clear that in the highest spheres of art and conduct individual preferences and inclinations must more or less determine our allegiances? A mixed metaphor this —spheres suggesting the old Ptolemaic astronomy, and allegiance carrying us over to a totally different realm of law—but the confusion implied has at least the advantage of showing how difficult it is to deal adequately in words with the complex phenomena we are considering. Admiration and its accompanying allegiance are,

like love and friendship, ultimate facts of life. We strive to describe and explain, but, ere we know it, we are floundering in the bog of the inexplicable. Some of us gravitate to Milton, more to Shakespeare. Some acknowledge Homer, some Virgil, some Dante, some Goethe. Others, passing to other arts, find their spirit's goal; but all these are few in comparison with those who seek their ideal character, their man of men, in the domains of philosophy and the sciences, and of conduct public and private. You and I, for example, could understand the man who declared that for him the most worshipful of all merely human names was that of Michael Angelo; yet this declaration might be almost meaningless to some admirable compatriot of ours who had shaped his life by studying the essays of Emerson or the speeches of Lincoln.

III

But are we not passing from the universe of fixed laws to the welter of chaos, where our flight will be as difficult in its way as was that of Satan in "Paradise Lost"? I think not. Two fixed laws at least I know of—one that I respect myself, the other that I respect you. I should not respect myself if I did not repeat unfalteringly that of all merely secular names—and I assume

that we are considering such only, for otherwise a discussion of this sort would be neither tolerable nor possible—the name of John Milton has meant and still means most to me. I should not respect you if I did not recognize your right to name a different name—for yourselves, not for me. Can this phenomenon be explained? No —we have just seen that it is one of the ultimate facts of life. Can an explanation be adumbrated? Perhaps so. Within the bounds of my knowledge Milton's is, on the whole, the greatest mind and soul controlled by the noblest purposes and mirrored for contemplation in the most perfect and permanent form and fashion. It is not a mere matter of positive achievement —others have obviously achieved more far-reaching effects than he, though none perhaps in his peculiar sphere of the sublimely soaring imagination. It is not a mere matter of mind, for the soul must count; it is not a mere matter of soul, for the mind must count; it is not a mere matter of mind and soul together, for the achievement must count. His life and works must be studied in their interrelations and in their relations with other lives and works, the student paying due regard to his own limitations. A parlous task indeed—ought we not to decline it if we have any modesty? No. Modesty's claims seem to be satisfied if we say, For us now

and here this or that man or cause has our allegiance; and, on the other hand, we obey the highest law of our nature if we seek the highest. Personally, in the sphere of conduct, I know of nothing higher than unspectacular patriotic self-sacrifice. I know of no more splendid example of this than Milton's calm determination to finish at the cost of his sight the reply to Salmasius that the council had requested him to compose. A mere book, seldom read now, and in a very questionable cause do you say? Perhaps so, perhaps not; but the remark is hardly to the point. The point is that a poet conscious of great powers and of a long-cherished purpose to create an enduring monument of his art which should vie with any bequeathed by antiquity and reflect lustre upon himself and his people, should have quietly put from him the thought that by declining the task proposed he might preserve the remnants of the most precious and priceless of all his senses, the sense that to the true scholar and poet seems almost synonymous with life itself, and should have calmly undertaken what he conceived to be his duty, should have faced the man who was regarded as the doughtiest scholarly champion in all Europe, and then have withdrawn into a world of darkness where the plaudits of his victory rang hollow in his ears. He lived to escape the political consequences of

his fight for what he looked upon as the cause of civil and religious liberty, he lived to write "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes"; but when he determined to give himself up to darkness in order that his country might not stand shorn of her chosen defender in the forum of European opinion, he could not have foreseen that he would finally triumph over blindness also and stand forth to posterity, not only as one of the most truly heroic of men, but as the sublimest of poets.

It was the man of letters who replied to Salmasius—the man of letters who had had ten years of training as a pamphleteer against Episcopacy, as a pleader for greater liberty of divorce and for freedom of the press, as the apologist of the regicides, as the would-be shatterer of the Royalist idol. But this man of letters was also from first to last, not merely an effective partisan fighter, not merely the most extraordinary master of poetic eloquence the English-speaking world has probably ever known, not merely a poet-scholar endowed with a somewhat rare capacity to take an important share in public affairs—he was, above all and in his entirety, a great man doing a man's part in support of his ideals. The blind middle-aged controversialist whom distinguished foreigners were wont to visit was the natural outcome of the more

charming and attractive young man whom we picture to ourselves as the retired student of Cambridge, the poet-recluse of Horton, the cultured traveler who captivated the scholars and poets of Italy—the author of the "Nativity Ode," of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," of "Comus" and "Lycidas" and the "Epitaphium Damonis." He was just as truly the man who might have been expected, when his public work was over and his cause was in eclipse, to put forth more amply than ever before his mighty faculties, to transport himself on the wings of his imagination out of the valley of the shadow into the highest reaches of the empyrean, to become, in a word, the author of "Paradise Lost." This is but to say that Milton's life is of a piece—that the unspectacular act of patriotic self-sacrifice which has been chosen as the culminating point in his character and conduct, has as its analogue in the sphere of his artistic achievement, the vast and powerful epic which some persons have held to be the most stupendous product of human genius.

IV

But my time is nearly spent, and, although, as I have just tried to show, we are really praising the man of letters when we praise the man, I want to try to indicate in the sphere of

Milton's art, just as in the sphere of his conduct, a reason for my long-cherished conviction that he is without a peer. To analyze any of his works would be impossible here, and superfluous as well. To endeavor to determine the special characteristics of his imagination, to set his charm over against his power, to dwell, as is the custom of the critics, upon the incomparable magnificence of his involved and sonorous style, to try to determine the relative value and standing of his several works, to compare Milton himself with other great writers of the world, all this, however legitimate to my theme, would carry us too far afield now, and—to be honest—is something I never intended to attempt. I shall content myself with saying that just as I have been able to discover no personality superior to Milton's, despite obvious limitations and defects which show that after all he was human like ourselves, so I have been able to discover no such poetic art as his, despite again limitations and defects which are apparent to any student. This final judgment of his art is probably just as ultimate a fact of my private experience as my judgment of his character, but in neither case is it a sporadic fact, unsupported by the experience of others. Nor is it, I trust, one of those judgments in which imagination plays a larger part than pa-

tient, technical, experimental testing. It so happens that in the course of my life I have had to do, not only a rather varied and large amount of teaching, but also a considerable amount of editing and of investigation in which style, both in its broad and in its narrow sense, was a paramount consideration. From this work, covering a period of twenty years, I have been compelled to draw one conclusion which I venture to phrase thus: so far as I am able to tell, Milton is the most sure-footed scaler of the heights of the imagination, the most marvelous wielder of the instruments of style. Take for an example of his merits in both respects that impressive passage from the seventh book of "Paradise Lost," which gives us the note of the raging, abysmal, sublime:

> On Heavenly ground they stood, and from the shore
> They viewed the vast immeasurable Abyss,
> Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
> Up from the bottom turned by furious winds
> And surging waves, as mountains to assault
> Heaven's height, and with the center mix the pole.

When, on the contrary, one desires simpler and more appealing effects, when one wants perfect felicity of expression married to profound worth of substance, to what poet should one more instinctively turn than to Milton? Where, for example, has unalloyed pathos ever been more

simply and more poignantly rendered than in the familiar lines from the opening of the third book?

> Thus with the year
> Seasons return; but not to me returns
> Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine.

Where will one find more splendidly sounded than in these lines from "Lycidas," the paean of the soul's triumph over death?

> Weep no more; woeful Shepherds, weep no more,
> For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
> Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
> So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
> And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
> And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
> Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.

Again, when one needs incitement to take up cheerfully and resolutely the burdens of life, to whom should one turn more readily than to the author of the Sonnets and of "Comus"?

> Mortals that would follow me,
> Love Virtue; she alone is free.
> She can teach ye how to climb
> Higher than the sphery chime;
> Or, if Virtue feeble were,
> Heaven itself would stoop to her.

But it is fully as rash to begin to illustrate

Milton's merits by quotations from his works as it is to attempt to analyze his powers and to define his excellence. He can help to infuse in us the "courage never to submit or yield," but there are times when prudence well replaces courage, and it is prudent not to try to exhaust Milton on the one hand, or one's audience on the other. Let me make, in conclusion, one more quotation, this time from that underrated poem "Paradise Regained"—a passage which, though it consists only of geographical names, seems to me to be fuller of the charm of the unknown and of indescribable, unapproachable harmony than almost anything else that even Milton ever wrote:—

> From Arachosia, from Candaor east,
> And Margiana, to the Hyrcanian cliffs
> Of Caucasus, and dark Iberian dales;
> From Atropatia, and the neighboring plains
> Of Adiabene, Media, and the South
> Of Susiana, to Balsara's haven.

For such utterances what praise is adequate? I am sure I do not know. All I know about it is that for me, compared with him, every other mortal man smacks of this earth. That endears some men to their admirers. So be it. The true Miltonian is content to believe that the soil John Milton smacks of is that of heaven, flowered with amaranths.

VIII

THE TARTARIN BOOKS AND THEIR AUTHOR

[The first three sections are made up of the introductions prefixed by me in 1899 to the translations of the three Tartarin Books published by Little, Brown & Co., and are utilized here with the publishers' kind permission. The fourth section is new, but is based in considerable measure on introductions I have written for other books by Daudet in particular, "The Nabob" (published by Wm. Heineman and D. Appleton & Co.) and a selection from his short stories (published by G. P. Putnam's Sons).]

I

To not a few persons Alphonse Daudet's claims to affectionate gratitude seem to rest chiefly upon his authorship of the Tartarin series,—at least upon the inimitable "Tartarin de Tarascon" and the equally inimitable "Tartarin sur les Alpes." Some critics, indeed, apparently because of peculiarities of temperament, lay most emphasis upon the excellent Parisian stories, "Froment jeune et Risler aîné," "Le Nabab," "Sapho," and the rest; others care most for the delicate short stories and sketches of the Provençal poet, which Daudet never ceased to be, such as those collected in "Lettres de mon Moulin"; while Daudet himself seems to have felt a partiality for that interesting mixture of pathetic romance, satire, and truth which he entitled "Jack." But it was as the discoverer of the now famous little town of Tarascon, and the introducer of its chief citizen Tartarin to a wider public, that he impressed the entire world of letters, general readers and critics as well, with the idea that he was a humorist, not only delightful, but full of original power. Now the fame of a humorist,

though precarious, is wonderfully strong and popular if it manages to survive a generation or two, and it is probably a true instinct on the part of many of Daudet's friends to press his claims as the creator of Tartarin. As a Parisian veritist, to adopt Professor Brander Matthews's useful phrase, Daudet must come into somewhat disastrous competition with Balzac; as a Provençal poet he runs the risk of being labeled "slight and fragile though charming"; but as Provençal poet and original humorist combined he seems to stand an excellent chance of being regarded by future generations as uniquely delightful. If this be true, Daudet's friends will do well, whenever they have occasion to sound his praises, to insist upon the unapproachable merits of the Tartarin books.

There is indeed another of his stories which should not be passed over here. This is that excellent though not quite perfect comedy, "Numa Roumestan," in which veritist, poet, and humorist are found combined in admirable proportions. In the two "Tartarins" the engaging follies and foibles of his native Provence are presented by Daudet with an exaggeration which, although it does not actually smack of the extravaganza or the farce, is never far removed from the suggestion of them. In "Numa," on the other hand, the same follies

and foibles are presented in a way which not only suggests but confirms the presence of the spirit of true comedy. There are parts of this story before it reaches its over-sentimental close which Molière himself would not have disdained, and it should always be held in high honor by the lovers of Tartarin, if only for the fact that in it his irrepressible friend Bompard, who had been barely mentioned in "Tartarin de Tarascon," was developed for future use in "Tartarin sur les Alpes" and in "Port-Tarascon."

But granted that Daudet is a great humorist who will hold his own with future readers, the fact remains that he is a French humorist, and the query at once arises whether he makes or will make that cosmopolitan appeal which we demand of truly great authors. In other words, will his humor bear permanent transplanting into other tongues? Any attempt to answer this question will expose the critic who makes it to a chance of committing a blunder of the kind that future critics delight to hold up to ridicule. A work of humor has difficulties enough to encounter in its author's native land; those difficulties are enhanced tenfold when the translator or interpreter has intervened. Even when two nations speak a common language, it rarely happens that they can appreciate each

other's efforts to be humorous and funny. Many an American fails to smile at the best things of Charles Lamb, and we may rest assured that Mark Twain can tell queer stories of his British experiences whenever he has a mind to. Then there is the case of Dickens, with whom Daudet is forever being compared. Dickens unquestionably conquered both the British and the American public, but he has always had detractors and it has never been easy to say with certainty how many of his admirers really care for his far from delicate humor. It is not unlikely, indeed, that more people have enjoyed his pathetic and sentimental pages than have relished his humorous characters and situations. Even "Pickwick" has remained a sealed book to many, though few have had the courage of a gentleman of my acquaintance who once read before a literary club passages from that immortal book to prove the thesis that there is no fun in Dickens. He thought to his dying day that the club's members were laughing with him, and not at him. But might not the tables have been turned if he had been a Frenchman addressing a literary club in a French provincial town before the days of the *entente cordiale?* Might he not have been cheered to the echo, while phrases like "Grosse bête!" "Conspuez Dickens!" made themselves heard amid the ap-

plause? It is surely not an impossible supposition, nor can one help feeling that, although the Tartarin books have been widely read in America, it would be a little unsafe to attempt to read passages from them to any save a select audience, even in this cosmopolitan land.

But the true lover is nothing if not bold, and Daudet's admirers may as well have the courage of their convictions and proclaim that if the Tartarin books do not give pleasure and happiness the world over, they ought to. Readers who demand only horse-laughs and farces may be warned away from them, as well as those who think that the secret of humor is to be found in queer spelling; but readers glad of any legitimate opportunity for a laugh or a smile may be counseled to make the acquaintance of Daudet's masterpieces as soon as they conveniently can.

II

The first of these masterpieces, "Tartarin de Tarascon," seems to have been begun about 1868. It was finally published in 1872, and it has ever since been a most popular book. Even if we did not have these dates, the Provençal setting and the fact that the apostrophe of the old dili-

gence to Tartarin must have been written by the author of "La Chèvre de M. Seguin" would have proved that these first adventures of the illustrious citizen of Tarascon developed in Daudet's mind about the time that he wrote and published those "Letters from my Mill" (1869), in which the story of the sad fate of M. Seguin's she-goat found a place; while the comparative failure to strike the comic vein—a vein apparent on the other hand in "Tartarin sur les Alpes"—would, seemingly, have proved equally well that the book stood at a considerable remove from "Numa Roumestan" (1881). But the date of a book is not so important as its matter and manner—and what of these?

The Arthurian romances used to be called "Matter of Britain"; just so the Tartarin books might be called "Matter of Tarascon," or, better still, "Matter of Provence." But his beloved Midi is described in many of Daudet's stories, and one could have got out of them a fairly complete picture of the region and its people,—of those irrepressible, exaggerating, mercurial inhabitants of that South of France "where words fly more quickly than elsewhere because the air is so light and buoyant,"—had Tartarin and his Tarascon never taken definite shape in Daudet's imagination. Primarily, therefore, the matter of these books is their

unique hero. Who, then, is Tartarin and whence does he proceed?

Daudet has answered these questions for us better than we should have done for ourselves. He tells us that the hero of his fertile imagination is a compound of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Cervantes has had many sins to answer for in the story-tellers whom he has inspired to send more or less queer heroes and their queerer attendants through the world hunting for adventures, but it should be as impossible to be sorry that Daudet fell under his influence as it is to be sorry that Fielding fell. The conception of a united Quixote-Sancho in the person of Tarascon's famous hunter and Alpinist is almost as original in its way as that of the Jekyll-Hyde of another English writer, and it is as much more beneficial to the world as a smile is worth more than a shudder. And who of us fails to smile at Tartarin and yet to love him? We have all of us read our romances of love or war, and aspired to imitate our heroes and then quietly settled back into our commonplace grooves. It may not have been romances of chivalry as with Don Quixote, or those of Gustave Aimard and Cooper as with our friend Tartarin, but we have all been stirred by the far-off and the strange, and if we have not persuaded ourselves that we have actually fought

with Tartars at Shanghai when we were really watering our plants at Tarascon, we have at least known and liked people who had persuaded themselves of equal impossibilities. Hence we have taken Tartarin to our hearts, and hence Daudet has added a character to European fiction and has rivaled the creators of Parson Adams and Dr. Primrose in his power to develop a personage who should win our laughter and our love at one and the same instant. It would perhaps be presumptuous to say that Tartarin is the French Falstaff, yet he surely has many qualities in common with Shakespeare's supreme creation in the realm of comedy.

With regard now to Daudet's manner of telling his story, nothing but praise seems possible. With absolute lightness of touch he sets Tarascon before us in such a way that we seem to know the little town and its self-centered inhabitants as well as we know our native place and the men with whom we grew up. And when we have once learned to know the town's hero, he is our hero, and we stand with him outside the menagerie listening to the lion's roar; we lie ill with him in the cabin of the "Zouave"; we accompany him in all his blood-curdling expeditions until we are in at the death of the tame lion; we follow him as obsequiously as does the devoted camel itself; we mingle with the ap-

plauding Tarasconese in order to welcome him home from his mighty labors,—all because Daudet has thrown in our eyes some of that golden dust which, as he informs us, always affects the vision of his brother Provençals. Perhaps, indeed, we do not find ourselves quite as comfortable as Tartarin did in the sunlight of the smiles of the fair Baïa, but then this means only that we are Anglo-Saxons after all. We are very dull Anglo-Saxons, however, if we lay down "Tartarin de Tarascon" without confessing that more good can come out of France than our doughty ancestors used to think.

It is not often that an author can add to a thoroughly successful book an equally successful sequel, yet this is what Daudet did when in 1885 he published "Tartarin sur les Alpes." In fact some people are inclined to think that he did more than this—that he actually made the second Tartarin more entertaining than the first, thus fairly rivaling, as has more than once been observed, the almost unique success achieved by Mark Twain when he followed "Tom Sawyer" with "Huckleberry Finn." The parallel between the two humorists is rendered still closer when we compare their respective attempts to conjure a third time with their hitherto potent wands, and own their comparative want of success.

Whether now "Tartarin sur les Alpes" is a greater masterpiece than "Tartarin de Tarascon," is a question about which we need not dispute too warmly. Some readers of excellent taste prefer the earlier book; some fully as competent to judge prefer the later. It may be permissible to remark, however, that there are reasons for holding that "Tartarin on the Alps" is the more artistic production. In the first place it seems to contain more of the true comic spirit. Certainly there is more of the comedy of manners in the description of the hotel of the Rigi-Kulm and its guests than can be found in the pages of "Tartarin de Tarascon." In other words, Daudet had spent the years between 1872 and 1885 in faithful study of society at Paris and elsewhere, and he had already learned how to write comedy in "Numa Roumestan." Again, there is more of the comic spirit and of true art in the love adventures of Tartarin with the fair Nihilist Sonia than there is in his relations with Baïa, which clearly suggest farce. Nor is there anything in the earlier volume that is as ingenious as Daudet's use of "a certain rope made in Avignon" or as daring as his incarceration of his hero in Bonnivard's cell at Chillon. Byron no longer has a monopoly of that famous dungeon.

And with regard to the hero's later exploits

in the more technical sense, it would seem that the champions of "Tartarin on the Alps" can make out a good case for themselves. It is true that lion-hunting in the desert is a less common pastime than alpine climbing, but just for this reason, perhaps, the pages devoted to Tartarin's actual experiences as a Nimrod seem to resemble a burlesque a little more than do the corresponding pages descriptive of the most *sans-souciant* ascent of the Jungfrau ever made. As for the disappearance of the intrepid Alpinist amid the snows of Mont Blanc and his sudden apparition in the midst of the Alpine Club of Tarascon, what more superb ending could a masterpiece of humor have?

Finally, when we consider the characters of the two books we may find reason to believe, as indeed we might have inferred from *à priori* considerations, that the Daudet of 1885 was a more consummate artist than the Daudet of 1872. Whether Tartarin himself is more inimitable as an Alpinist than as a mighty hunter who disdained panthers and such ignoble beasts, and would be satisfied with nothing less than a hecatomb of lions, may perhaps be doubted, although it would seem that his character is more delicately shaded. But almost every other personage of the second book shows the effects of Daudet's thirteen years' experience in charac-

ter-drawing. Examine, for example, the evolution of Pascalon, and Bravida, and Bézuquet, and observe that for the Prince of Montenegro we have Bompard in exchange,—Bompard, who yields only to Tartarin himself as the most deliciously and lovably absurd of visionaries.

But why should we continue the ungrateful task of comparing "Tartarin sur les Alpes" with its delightful predecessor to the detriment of the latter? *Vive* Tartarin, the Alpinist; but *vive* also Tartarin-Nimrod. There is no need for us to initiate a contest similar to that waged between the partisans of rice and the stanch defenders of prunes in the dining-room of the Rigi hotel. For when we are engaged in our critical balancings and comparisons, who breaks in upon us but the illustrious Tartarin himself, bent on forcing us into as wild a dance as that in which he succeeded in involving the factions of the Swiss caravansary? There is really no need of criticism when Tartarin is around. Think how small Professor Schwanthaler and the Academician Astier-Réhu appear beside him. He is a hero favored of the gods. He never seems to lack money, and he is actually a hero to his fellow-townsmen. The glamour of the South is upon him and is radiated from him upon all who are brought within his magic influence. If we do not look upon life as genial

optimists after having made his acquaintance, then we are indeed fit, in the words of the great dramatist who has ere this hailed Daudet as in part at least a kindred spirit, "for treason, stratagems, and spoils."

III

Five years after "Tartarin sur les Alpes," Daudet published the third and last volume of his series, under the appropriate title of "Port-Tarascon." The vogue of his humor throughout the civilized world was sufficiently proved by the fact that a distinguished American novelist found it worth his while to make an excellent version of these latest adventures of the superb Tartarin, while a popular American magazine was glad to secure permission to give the translation to its readers in serial form. But the Daudet of 1890 was a very different man from the Daudet who had made, or ought to have made, Europe hold its sides when, with perfect gravity, he exclaimed, "Beyond a doubt Mount Blanc counted one victim more, and what a victim!" Since 1885 he had been an intense nervous sufferer. That dreadest of all the foes of the man of letters, insomnia, had taken hold upon him. He would indulge himself in long periods of relaxation and then would work with feverish

energy, with results not altogether propitious to his fame. The bitter, if interesting, satire on the French Academy entitled "L'Immortel" belonged to this period, and was hardly the best of forerunners for another Tartarin book. It is true, of course, that great humorists have been known to do excellent work under the pressure of disease, and even of family cares and sufferings, and it is further true that "Port-Tarascon" shows many traces of a master's hand; but it is not given to every one to be a Hood, and it is clear that a sustained masterpiece of humorous fiction is about as difficult a task as any ill man could have set for himself.

But could Daudet have made "Port-Tarascon" equal to its two predecessors even if he had been in perfect health? We may well doubt it. As we have seen, Mark Twain, who, like Daudet, had made "Huckleberry Finn" the equal or the superior of "Tom Sawyer," failed when he undertook a trilogy. Even Shakespeare did not make an altogether conspicuous success of his attempt to depict Falstaff as a lover. The ebbing and flowing tide of artistic success seems to reverse the Canute scene, and to say to the kings of poetry and fiction, "Thus far shall ye go and no farther." Balzac felt the force of this law in his successive portraitures of Vautrin, nor does Cooper seem to escape its

workings in his "Leatherstocking" series. Perhaps the indefatigable Trollope, who came as near to being a machine as any author of more than respectable powers has ever come, approximated unbroken success in his Barsetshire novels more completely than any of his greater brothers has ever done in a continuous group of works; but with all due, nay, very profound, respect for Trollope's not fully appreciated ability, some of us would rather make a comparative failure in Daudet's company than succeed in his.

Yet wherein does "Port-Tarascon" fall below its predecessors? This question might be answered by enumerating many scenes and episodes from the later book, and setting them in contrast with admittedly successful features of the earlier volumes. For example, the defense of the monastery of Pampérigouste by Tartarin-Crusader is plainly less spontaneous and amusing than any of the great exploits of Tartarin-Nimrod or Tartarin-Alpinist. Again, where in the first two books will one find as many dragging pages as are consumed by the veritable legend of Antichrist told upon the deck of the Tutu-Panpan by the Reverend Father Bataillet? But it is not in its details, some of which are admirable, that we find the cause of Daudet's comparative want of success in his last venture in humorous fiction; it is in its general

subject-matter, which is too gloomy to be treated gayly.

"Port-Tarascon" is at bottom a satire, giving Daudet's views with regard to the experiments in colonizing that his beloved France was making. He had no illusions on the subject, and he was bent on stripping his readers of any illusions they might have. He so far succeeded in his purpose as often to make one wonder whether it is not a very good satire one is reading. But the form into which he has thrown this satire is that of a humorous story pure and simple, which should have no greater satiric content than is consonant with a mild holding up to ridicule of certain foibles common to humanity. A vein of specific, mordant satire is entirely foreign to such a work of art. Yet such a vein is continually cropping up in "Port-Tarascon"; indeed, one wonders that the anti-expansionists in the United States did not make the book one of their campaign documents. It follows, therefore, that, form and substance being at variance, the story, as a whole, fails to give thorough aesthetic pleasure.

This conclusion is strengthened by an examination of the treatment accorded by Daudet to his unique hero. One has no objection to Tartarin's being made the dupe of that crafty schemer, the Duke de Mons. The "man of the

North" may triumph over the confiding, visionary "man of the South," but the latter will retain our respect. Yet when the deluded Tartarin deludes in his turn the whole population of Tarascon and leads them forth, men, women, and children, to endure all manner of hardships on an insalubrious island of the Southern seas, one feels that Daudet has been too hard upon Tartarin, upon Tarascon, upon his visionary countrymen, and upon the trustful reader. It is true that many of the adventures of the colonists are related with remarkable vivacity, and that the old humor is continually flashing out. It is true also that all the good Tarasconese, save the brave Bravida, are brought back to their beloved town, and are allowed to resume their easy-going life as if nothing had happened. But one feels that Tartarin has been degraded, and at the end one is forced to see him leave Tarascon in poverty and to hear the news of his death as an exile. Is this treating us fairly? What has the glorious Tartarin, after his hairbreadth escapes amid the burning sands of the deserts and the gleaming snows of the Alps, to do with a commonplace foe like Death? He deserved immortality, this ebullient son of the merry South. Death for the Duke de Mons, but not for Tartarin! It was all very well for Trollope to overhear a conversation in a restau-

rant, and, influenced by it, go home and kill Mrs. Proudie the next morning; we do not mind being in at the death of that matchless shrew; but Tartarin!—he should have lived forever.

Yet in our affection for Tartarin we have no right to be unjust to Daudet, and we should be unjust if we did not acknowledge that "Port-Tarascon," with all its faults, is a legitimate child of his rare imagination. Some of the adventures of the colonists are described in a thoroughly admirable fashion. The landing of the British and the dignified conduct of Tartarin—who might, however, have been left a bachelor—could scarcely have been surpassed. The character of Pascalon, too, has grown in his creator's hands, and we follow with amused interest his love-affair with the heiress of the Espazettes and his single-hearted devotion to his exalted master. As for Tartarin's complacent tracing of the parallel between his own career and that of the great Napoleon, it is worthy of a place in the earlier volumes, nor is the incident of his firing upon La Tarasque derogatory to his true fame. And when we are once more comfortably back in Tarascon, what could be better than that delicious trial-scene—with the heated air putting the stranger judges to sleep, but affecting not a whit the excited populace or

that prince of long-winded advocates, Bompard du Mazet, who "had spoken for five hours"—with Tartarin, imperturbable in his innocence, but suddenly rising and exclaiming, with his hand outstretched, "Before God and man I swear that I did not write that letter," and then, on examining the document, answering very simply, "True enough, this is my very hand-writing; this letter was sent by me; I just didn't recall it,"—finally with the dramatic apparition of the long-deplored Bompard, who had at last made up his mind to venture across the suspension-bridge and save his old friend Tartarin from ignominy and perhaps from death —what, we may well ask, could be more Tarasconesque and therefore more worthy of Daudet's genius than all this? Even the parting of Tartarin from his friends, when he, too, must take his life in his hands and creep across the dread bridge, would be delightful were not the shadow of the dismal end cast upon us.

Yes, "Port-Tarascon" is a book which the lover of Daudet cannot afford to neglect if he will be content to enjoy it by portions and not consider it too narrowly as a whole. But it is not a book to begin with, for it might easily happen that a beginner, having heard of the wondrous exploits of Tartarin the Superb, might find his expectations so betrayed that he

would think it unnecessary to peruse the two indisputable masterpieces that preceded it.

IV

It is now time to return from Tartarin to his creator, or rather to his creator's other works. It would be nearer the truth to say that it is time to stop, certainly if I were consulting only the interests of this paper from the point of view of its unity. Daudet, however, is a subject admirers—that is to say friends—do not soon grow weary of discussing; and whether or not he is making many new friends, he can scarcely have lost through alienation many of his old admirers. The latter at least will pardon my unwillingness to let a favorite of my younger years escape with only the praise I have managed to bestow in a few pages upon three out of the score of books that bear his name and illustrate his genius. Genius? Are we sure, looking back a decade, that the writer who so charmed us in the last quarter of the last century really was an authentic genius and not the possessor of delightful but far from exalted talents? Are his books holding their own? Is he likely to be remembered by Frenchmen of a hundred years hence as a truly great and original novelist, or by Anglo-Saxon readers as a

sort of French Dickens with a spice of Oliver Goldsmith apparent in his happy-go-lucky composition? Will "Le Nabab" continue to be the novel to which one must go for the most brilliant picture of the Paris of the Second Empire, or will that romantic and pathetic picture of Daudet's childhood and youth, "Le Petit Chose," attain the position of an undisputed classic? Will the art of "Sapho" seem as inevitable to posterity as it does to some of us who read it before the word "naturalistic" became more or less old-fashioned, or will the conclusions of the puritans with regard to it be justified, whatever may be said of their point of view? These and similar questions seem to present themselves whenever one thinks of Daudet and his works as themes of critical exegesis —if indeed one ever thinks of them in that terrible way. Can one be a true friend if one does not instinctively resent the notion of appraising in any formal fashion a character so engaging and achievements so full of individual charm?

But, while the dead may escape ill words for a season, they cannot, if they have claims upon the world's remembrance, escape criticism for long. They must be praised by friends and condemned by foe, and finally judged impartially. Even Daudet who, after the early family misfortunes and the wretched year as an usher

described in "Le Petit Chose," seemed to have stumbled into a ring of dancing and affable fairies—curious fairies those, the Empress Eugénie and the Duke de Morny—even Daudet, the petted, who reminded Zola of a high-bred Arabian steed, saw the idyl of his life converted into a tragedy, and for all his grace and charm could not escape Rhadamanthus. No such grim and authoritative bar awaits him here; he will merely encounter an admirer whose enthusiasm has been chastened by the passage of time, but by no means extinguished.

If I may be allowed to liken Daudet and his works to a ship attempting to traverse the ocean of fame, where squalls are continually arising, and if—some stretching of the imagination is needed here—I may consider myself captain for the nonce of the gallant bark and charged with the responsibility of lightening the vessel in order to enable it the better to breast the waves, what ought I in all haste to tumble overboard?

First, I think, would go the early poems and the dramas. The reminiscential volumes, "Trente Ans de Paris" and "Souvenirs d'un Homme de Lettres," I should want to reserve as pendants to "Le Petit Chose," but I should have them brought on deck to be ready for the toss. "Le Petit Chose" itself I could never or-

der to any fate except some sort of translation, so perfect an idyl is it before its sentimentalizing pages begin. This means merely that what concerns Daudet himself remains dear to me, and that a transcript from life deserves to live, while mere romancing, and that is what the second part of "Le Petit Chose" is, deserves often very short shrift. The little Robinson Crusoe of the abandoned silk factory at Nîmes, the usher of the school at Alais who tries to hang himself with a violet neck-tie, the selfish but well-meaning seeker after fortune pacing the streets of Paris in a pair of rubber shoes—these are figures too real and too attractive to be ordered to walk the plank.

Another transcript from childhood, "Premier Voyage, Premier Mensonge," I should like to keep, if only because it furnishes a curious variation on the theme of Balzac's "Un Début dans la Vie," but I am afraid it will have to go, along with the other posthumous works and the novels written after disease had distorted the genius and wracked the nerves of this poet who should never have known a physical ill. I do not see how that overwrought study of Protestant bigotry, "L'Évangeliste," or that biting satire on the Academy, "L'Immortel," or the problem stories, "Rose et Ninette" and "La detite Paroisse," or even the strong "Soutien de

Famille," which drags in irregular sexual relations almost by main force, excellent though all of them are in this or that respect, could be preserved by any save a thick and thin Daudet partisan, and such a partisan acting as captain of the novelist's bark would surely sink along with his over-freighted charge.

With these later works I should throw over without the least regret, the early collection of stories known as "Femmes d'Artistes," and I should add "Robert Helmont," with apologies to some of its pages. This would leave us, to all intents and purposes, about a dozen books to reckon with. Two of the three Tartarin books we have already decided to keep just as long as we possibly can. What are we to do with the two best known collections of short stories and with the six greater novels, "Fromont jeune et Risler aîné," "Jack," "Le Nabab," "Les Rois en Exil," "Numa Roumestan" and "Sapho," which, between 1874 and 1884, placed Daudet, to quote Mr. Edmund Gosse, "for the moment at all events, near the head of contemporary European literature"?

There can be little doubt as to the answer that must be given by any admirer of Daudet to a question with regard to the fate of those two excellent collections of short stories and sketches, "Lettres de mon Moulin" and "Contes du

Lundi." It requires no great confidence in one's critical powers to predict long life, if not immortality, for such stories as "La Dernière Classe" and "Le Siège de Berlin," from the latter collection, as well as for almost the entire contents of the fascinating "Lettres," in which Daudet, the Provençal poet, is seen in full measure. The Daudet sobered and instructed by the Franco-Prussian war is well represented in the "Contes," especially in the two stories named, which many persons regard as the most pathetic he ever wrote, and in that description of the game of billiards which is so scathing an indictment of incompetence in high places. But powerful and occasionally delightful though the "Contes" are, they have not the unity, factitious and real, that characterizes the "Lettres," and if I had to choose between the two—why will the human mind persist in putting itself into imaginary quandaries?—I should take the latter. Perhaps it would be wiser to say that I should take a composite volume made up of the very choicest tales of the "Contes" and the "Lettres," but what would become of the atmosphere, the tone that lend the "Lettres de mon Moulin" so individual a charm, a charm more expansive and buoyant and in consequence perhaps less penetrating than the equally individual charm that attaches to Hawthorne's "Mosses from an Old

Manse"? As I have pointed out elsewhere, it is a curious fact that for the southern analogue to Hawthorne's book we have to go, not to Poe, but across the seas to Daudet; and it is quite as curious that we should have been able to pay our literary debt to France by exporting to that country the "Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque." The relations of Daudet, Hawthorne, Poe, and let us add Maupassant, to complete the group of the supreme short-story writers of the immediate past, are, however, less important to our present purposes than the admirable art of the "Lettres," a volume which is not a mere happy collection of delightful improvisations, but the work of a painstaking and in some respects consummate artist. Will the art that makes us see the scissors-grinder shrinking from the brutal jests and taunts of his fellow travelers, or that makes us feel the pathos and the irony of the death of the little Dauphin be soon forgotten by Frenchmen or by the world at large?

But works of inimitable humor and exquisitely artistic short-stories and sketches do not furnish as broad and sure a basis for fame as three or four indisputably great novels. Has Daudet these to his credit as well? I am by no means sure that he has. "Fromont jeune et Risler aîné" was and is very popular and it is certainly

interesting, but although Delobelle, the worn-out actor who is still a hero to his wife and daughter, may be pronounced a successful creation, it seems to me that the central theme, the ruin wrought by the vile heroine Sidonie, is scarcely handled with really tragic effectiveness, and that the book is impressive rather than great. Appealing and interesting rather than great is the judgment I am reluctantly compelled to pass upon "Jack," the over-long and over-sentimental story which Daudet is said to have taken to his own heart. There are excellent things in "Jack," the pages that describe the literary "dead-beats," for example, and it is hard to forget the young hero at work in the engine room of the steamer; but the unity, the simplicity, the inevitability of the universal are not plainly present in a story which one cares for rather than delights in or wonders at.

I have already expressed my high admiration for "Numa Roumestan," and, if I must speak less warmly of "Les Rois en Exil," it is not because I am blind to the powers of characterization shown in the chief personages of that interesting story—the noble Queen, the loyal servitor, the decadent King. If "Les Rois en Exil" had a broader appeal, if it did not trench a little too much upon the domain of fantastic romance, I should feel more certain of its per-

manent hold upon readers. So, too, if "Le Nabab" were a story with a well-knit plot, instead of being a series of episodes, some of them it is true of quite extraordinary power, I should be more confident that Daudet could count at least three of those really great novels we are searching for. Yet, when its faults of structure and its excess of sentimentality have been duly discounted, this picture of Parisian life under the second Napoleon is a very notable book. It sets before us most vividly "the political corruption, the financial recklessness, the social turmoil, the public ostentation, the private squalor that led to the downfall of an empire and almost to that of a people." It presents us with interesting personages, some of them thinly disguised, and in the Nabob, François Bravay, and Mora, the Duke de Morny, it almost succeeds in giving us two characters worthy of a master of characterization. Many of the scenes are striking, and a few, especially the suicide of that man of tone, Monpavan, are superb. Yet one is not altogether sure of Daudet's reserve power, of the copiousness of his genius, and some of us at least tire of the Joyeuse family, although we are willing to admit them as exemplary foils, much as we put up with the better-born persons in "Old Mortality." A great novel?—well, let us

not answer hastily. Surely a very effective story.

The sixth novel, "Sapho," remains, and shall we find greatness there where many British and American readers have scented only putrefaction? If the ship I am supposed to be commanding carried boarding school boys and girls as passengers, I am afraid I should have to order "Sapho" overboard. I do not much believe in the utility of purpose novels for certain sorts of purposes. I doubt if "Roxana" has made many Magdalens, or whether "Sapho" has greatly improved the morals of young Frenchmen. But if the much-talked-of book be viewed as a product of the art of naturalistic fiction, I do not well see how it can be regarded as anything short of a masterpiece. We may be sorry that Daudet did not go on and give us a more perfect example of dramatic fiction tending toward comedy than he gave us in "Numa Roumestan." We may regret his violent swerving into the purpose novel and the psychological study, which became apparent in "L'Évangeliste." We may dislike naturalistic fiction and, in particular, we may affirm that the *femme collante,* or rather the man she glues herself to, ought not to be made the subject of a novelist's analysis—did not John Bright demand that every

bad character be banished from fiction?—but if we are to read and judge "Sapho" at all, we ought to ask ourselves, before we condemn it as a work of art, whether in it Daudet has applied in a workmanlike or a masterlike fashion the rules of the special type of fiction he was trying to write. If we use this test, I can conceive of only one possible answer. "Sapho" is a masterpiece of resolute naturalistic art. Alone of Daudet's novels it escapes the charge of being an inharmonious mixture of sentimental idealism and unflinching naturalism. The notes of extravagance and of weakness are absent, and if the note of remorseless truth is overpowering, we always have the privilege of putting down the book, just as we have or take the privilege of forgetting that our comfortable dining-rooms and libraries are not an hour's distance from the haunts of poverty and vice.

But is "Sapho" a great novel? In its own essential merits, yes; in its relations with the world of readers, no. Its subject matter is too exceptional in character ever to allow it to appeal to any save a comparatively small set of readers. But its appeal to admirers of courageous and consistent art, and the appeal of "Numa Roumestan" to lovers of comedy, together with that of "Le Nabab" and "Fromont jeune et Risler aîné" to all classes of readers,

to say nothing of "Les Rois en Exil" and "Jack," may make one feel that after all there is a good chance that as a novelist Daudet will not drop slowly out of sight; for his novels will be supported by and will support his two collections of short stories, his "Petit Chose" and his Tartarin books. It is a delightful and varied and not too formidable body of literature that he has left to preserve his memory, and the personality which emerges from it is so charming that our insistent questions about greatness seem almost impertinent. The bark of his fame ought to keep afloat for many a year, and I hope that Captain Time, who really orders that lightening of the cargo I have been pretending to superintend, will be even more merciful than I have dared to be.

VIII

THACKERAY'S VERSE

[Reprinted, with some alterations, from an introduction to a volume in an edition of Thackeray's works, published by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.]

I

One of the first bits we have of Thackeray's writing is in verse, and during most of his life he indulged his propensity for rhyming; but it was not until 1855 that he wrote a preface to a collected edition of his poems. He dated this from Boston, and expressed the wish that the simultaneous publication of his verses in England and in America might interest the public that had liked his prose. It is needless to say that many readers of the American edition, of the first volume of "Miscellanies," and of the Tauchnitz reprint, were delighted to secure in permanent form the treasures of fun and sentiment in rhyme that their favorite writer had long been scattering through the pages of *Punch*. About six years after his death, a number of additional poems were gleaned for the eighteenth volume of the Library Edition of the collected works. Others have been collected or have come to light since, until, so far as mere volume of production is concerned, the great novelist may claim a fairly important place among the British poets.

He deserves also in my judgment a not inconspicuous place on the score of the quality of

his productions in verse. His name does not figure, however, in some of the chief anthologies of English poetry, and one of his late biographers has not followed Trollope's excellent example in giving a separate chapter to the rather misnamed "Ballads." On the other hand, in that charming collection of familiar verse, the late Frederick Locker-Lampson's "Lyra Elegantiarum," Thackeray holds a high place, and he would hold an equally high one in an anthology of humorous poetry compiled with the critical acumen bestowed by Locker-Lampson and Palgrave upon their admirable treasuries of verse. This shows us that his place is with Prior and with Hood on the latter's comic side, rather than with Herrick or with Campbell. He is a writer of *vers de société* and of rhymed *jeux d'esprit*—we have the things in English even if we borrow the French names for them—he is only very occasionally the truly lyrical poet, rising above brief, brilliant, and buoyant bursts of wit, humor, and sentiment into the region of passion or of insight into the soul of things.

That such should be the case need not surprise us. Although he became somewhat sentimental in his later years—many will prefer to say mellow—Thackeray was always so endowed with a sense for fun and with a power to detect

the follies and the shams of life, that it was difficult for him either to care greatly for some of the higher forms of poetry or to trust himself to express his own emotions in verse. He wrote a ballad, "The Willow Tree," that would pass muster in almost any collection of romantic verse, "simply that he might render his own work absurd by his own parody." He grew up in an age of literary affectations, and he waged war against them in his early stories like "Catherine," in his burlesques, and in his rhymes. He never tired of protesting against what he deemed the false notes of Byron's poetry, failing to recognize the sincere passion and the intellectual power of the poet who had conquered the modern world. He speaks of Milton with respect, but it is evident that sublime poetry wearied him, and that he had no great taste for the idealism of Shelley. Yet he admired Keats, perhaps because of a slight strain of artistic kinship, and the polish and poise of his friend Tennyson's compositions naturally appealed to him. After all, however, in the matter of verse as well as in that of prose, his heart was with the eighteenth century. He believed Pope to be one of the greatest of poets, and he praised the fine close of "The Dunciad" in language fairly extravagant. No one has ever written with more insight and affection than he of the inimitable

grace and sprightliness of Prior and the ease of Gay. Nor has any other modern more thoroughly appreciated the humanity, the wisdom, the pervasive charm of the master of his own eighteenth-century masters—Horace the well-beloved. Thus it would have been little short of a miracle if Thackeray, the admirer of Horace and Prior, the foe of Byron, the opponent of the sentimentalists and romancers of his own day, had to his credit more than an infrequent burst of true lyric poetry, such as the lines "Ah, bleak and barren was the moor," for all their faulty rhymes, may be pronounced to be.

But it seems uncatholic and needless to deny the title of poet to any master of language who deals, in measured rhythm, with the materials furnished him by the world in which we live. He must, of course, give us æsthetic pleasure, but this any master of language and of the technic of verse is sure to do. We may reserve the palaces for the kings of song, but let us remember that in the realm of poetry there are many mansions. Whether the mere scribbler of funny rhymes deserves to inhabit one is a question we need not discuss; but the writer of familiar verses such as "The Cane-bottom'd Chair" and "The Mahogany Tree" is entitled to an abode among the poets, if the power to sing one's self into another's heart confers such a

title. If Palgrave had put either or both of these poems or "At the Church Gate" into the revised edition of the first series of his "Golden Treasury," few readers would have regretted their inclusion.

II

This is not the place, however, to discuss the delicate matter of the differences between lyric poetry and familiar verse. The "Golden Treasury" and the "Lyra Elegantiarum" contain several pieces in common, and the most refined taste is powerless to determine to which collection they primarily belong. There is little to be gained, moreover, from entering upon a discussion so intricate in its nature when we have in the introductions furnished by Locker-Lampson to "Lyra Elegantiarum" and by Professor Brander Matthews to "American Familiar Verse" such thorough expositions of the fascinating if difficult subject. A few words about Thackeray's specific contribution to the mass of English *vers de société* will be more to the point.

Professor Matthews aptly characterizes Thackeray's work in this vein when he says that the author of "The Pen and the Album" frequently achieved "the rare balance of fun and sentiment which is expected in familiar verse." "There is a frolicsome tenderness," he contin-

ues, "and a gentle sparkle about the 'Mahogany Tree' and about the 'Ballad of Bouillabaisse' which is characteristically Thackerayan." We may add that there is a dash and a boldness and copiousness of descriptive power in "The White Squall," a manly briskness in "Peg of Limavaddy," a pensive grace in "Piscator and Piscatrix," a depth of sentiment in "The Cane-bottom'd Chair," a sense for the impressiveness and picturesqueness of history as well as for fundamental ethics in "The Chronicle of the Drum," that show how freely and in how masterlike a fashion Thackeray moved in his chosen sphere of poetry. Occasionally, as in the last-named poem, he transcends the narrow limits of space allowed to the writer of *vers de société,* and he is too slipshod in his rhyming; but in the main he is brief, brilliant, and buoyant, as the critics tell us such a poet should be, and he combines humor and sentiment in a most felicitous manner. What could be better than the close of "The White Squall":

> And when, its force expended,
> The harmless storm was ended,
> And as the sunrise splendid
> Came blushing o'er the sea,
> I thought as day was breaking,
> My little girls were waking,
> And smiling, and making
> A prayer at home for me.

Here the groups of feminine rhymes, the lilt of the rhythm, the subtle effect produced by the sacrifice of a stress in the seventh line, and the exquisite tenderness of the final verse give us a passage scarcely surpassed in its kind.

Professor Matthews thinks that "Thackeray derives from Cowper and from Goldsmith; while it is rather from Prior that Praed descends." He thinks Thackeray's verses suave and suggestive, Praed's sometimes a little hard. It is easy to agree with him in the main, unless he implies a mild censure of Prior. Prior was to Cowper, a good authority, the prince of English writers of social verse, and a careful study of the earlier poet's work has convinced some of us that the later and very different poet was right in his judgment. Modern readers, who are generally inclined to sacrifice a little art if they can thereby gain a little sentiment, are slightly unfair to Prior, whom Thackeray judged more acutely, and whose "Lines to a Child of Quality," "The Merchant to Secure his Treasure," "A Better Answer," and half a dozen other poems remain, in all probability, the unapproachable masterpieces of English familiar verse. But Cowper and Goldsmith with their playfulness and sentiment are excellent poets from whom to derive, and Thackeray was fortunately not confined to them or denied a certain persuasiveness

and archness of his own. He derives from Horace—witness the substance though not the form of "The Age of Wisdom"; from Prior—who else inspired "A Doe in the City"? even from Praed—read only "The Almack's Adieu," though that is a burlesque of the empty verse of the Annuals. Closer scrutiny would reveal the influence of Béranger—from whom Thackeray translated—and perhaps of other French poets, as well as of more than one of the lighter eighteenth-century English rhymers, if not rather, of the large mass of occasional verse produced in that golden age of wits and beaux. What is at least certain is that Thackeray easily caught the manner of another poet. "Abd-el-Kader at Toulon," for example, suggests Macaulay, and the translator of Béranger was far from being a bad imitator. Yet in the last analysis, whose manner but his own did he catch in "The Cane-bottom'd Chair"?

> It was but a moment she sate in this place,
> She'd a scarf on her neck, and a smile on her face!
> A smile on her face, and a rose in her hair,
> As she sate there, and bloom'd in my cane-bottom'd chair.

III

There is no need to continue to dwell on Thackeray's *vers de société,* which, although not so clear-cut as Landor's, or so brilliant as

Praed's, are among the best that modern literature affords. To expatiate upon his comic verse is probably just as needless. There will always be readers who will be able to read "Little Billee," and "The Battle of Limerick," and "The Wofle New Ballad of Jane Roney and Mary Brown," and "Jeames of Buckley Square," without even a smile. Let us hope, however, that the number of these worthy persons will grow smaller year by year. A laugh is a good thing on most occasions, and it is better to laugh at thin wit and humor than to be grieved at it or insulted by it. Some of Thackeray's fun was forced at the time he wrote—did he not have to make an income by writing for *Punch* many an hour when he was weary and lonely?—some of it has lost its buoyancy and point with the lapse of years; but it was all well meant, most of it is good enough to smile at now, and some of it ought to unbend the countenances even of the harassed elders and the disillusioned youngsters of our own generation. What matter if, as Trollope elaborately showed, Thackeray's Irish was really a new language, the Hybernico-Thackerayan! The present writer is not in consequence ashamed of having carried in his head for thirty years the opening stanzas of "The Battle of Limerick." What matter if the trick of producing a laugh by bad spelling is a time-worn one! "When Moonlike ore the Hazure

Seas" is or may be as amusing to a man of forty as to a lad of fifteen. The burlesque, "Sorrows of Werther," is a classic, and deserves to be. "The Legend of St. Sophia of Kioff," with its variation on "Belshazzar's Feast" and its other extravagances, is in very truth "The Great Cossack Epic," or at least the only Cossack Epic with which some of us are acquainted.

We may conclude with the remark that probably no reader of Thackeray's easy and often exuberant verse would be likely to suppose that he frequently found difficulty in making his rhymes flow. Yet such seems to have been the fact. "Piscator and Piscatrix" was almost abandoned as hopeless, and Mrs. Ritchie tells us that her father "would come into the room worried and excited, saying: 'Here are two more days wasted. I have done nothing at all. It has taken me four mornings' work to produce six lines.'" Jawkins, one of Thackeray's stock characters, worked his small mind faster, and doubtless would have been ashamed to apply it to such trifles as "The Cane-bottom'd Chair" and "Little Billee." Let us not imitate Jawkins; let us rather conclude with Trollope that Thackeray's verses "will be more popular than those of many highly reputed poets, and that as years roll on they will gain rather than lose in public estimation."

IX

A TALK TO WOULD-BE TEACHERS

[Read before the Men's English Graduate Club of Columbia University, March 16, 1906, and printed under the title of "An Academic Sermon" in *The Sewanee Review,* July, 1906.]

I

THE prevalence of the notion among all sorts and conditions of men that they could have done better in another calling than in the humdrum one they have chosen has been often made the subject of ironical comment. Their attempts, periodic or spasmodic, to give concrete proofs of their versatility—that is, to furnish evidence that their notion is not ill-founded—have also afforded satirically inclined persons frequent occasions for laughter. Sometimes, however, a thoughtful mind probes far below the surface and finds in the phenomenon material—if not for philosophy, at least for poetry. You will remember the use Browning made of Raphael's century of sonnets and of the angel Dante painted. I thought of Browning's poem the other day when I picked up a volume by the distinguished French critic, Jules Lemaître. It was entitled "En Marge des Vieux Livres," and, instead of finding a collection of essays on literary masterpieces, I was lured into reading a delightful group of short-stories or *contes* developed by the writer's imagination or fancy from a starting point found either in the Iliad or the

Odyssey or the Gospels or the Golden Legend. Eleven years before, M. Lemaître had published a similar volume entitled, from the leading story, "Myrrha." Six years before that, as far back as 1888, my friend the English scholar, the late Dr. Richard Garnett, had also found here and there among the old and strange books he was guarding in the British Museum thoughts and fancies that had germinated into quaint stories, which he had collected under the title of "The Twilight of the Gods." The Frenchman's tales were the more graceful and charming; the Englishman's the more witty and bizarre. I am here concerned with their volumes, however, only as they illustrate in the realm of literature the prevalence of the desire to succeed in some other than the chosen, the natural field for our talents, or at least the field which the public in its rough and ready fashion has come to regard as proper to them.

The tyranny of the public in making these rough and ready judgments has been a subject of frequent complaint. Lincoln's statesmanship, as we all know, was long discounted because of his reputation as a humorist. I once bought a copy of the first edition of Dr. Garnett's tales from a Holborn bookseller at a shockingly low price, and, as I sat reading it till a late hour in my lodgings, I was impelled to meditate upon

the irony of fate that plants nine out of ten of us on a little plot of calling or career and, with more authority than Canute's, exclaims, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther!" There is no use in kicking against the pricks, or in pursuing the subject—especially as instead of contenting myself with an introductory paragraph or two, I am abusing my privileges by approaching my real topic of discussion along as circuitous a route as I can contrive to take.

Well, why not? Am I not condemned to lecture, week in and week out, in as straightforward and formal a way as I can compass, upon authors, authors, authors, until I am tempted to wish, either that the greatest Author of all had blotted out what we flatter ourselves to be his fairest work, or that there could be a real book-burning Omar, who would have the sense to preserve a few volumes of great poetry. Let me then continue to meander long enough to remark that in all the illustrations I have given of attempted incursions into other than the chosen fields of activity a certain artistic fitness of choice may be discovered. No vulgar striving, no sordid discontent, no flagrant metamorphosis is here such as may be seen in the exemplary bourgeois who endeavors to make a place for himself as a leader of society. Proseman wishes to show that he too can write verse, painter that

he can sing, and poet that he can paint, critic that he can tell stories, and novelist that he can criticise—these are the innocent aspirations and delusions we are considering. Dante, painting his angel, anticipated Dryden in thinking—naturally, he could not quote him:

> For Painture near adjoining lay,
> A plenteous province, and alluring prey.

And Browning was charitable or enthusiastic enough to write some six centuries later:

> You and I would rather see that angel,
> Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
> Would we not? than read a fresh *Inferno.*

Easy rhetorical question for the poet to ask—neither picture nor fresh "Inferno" being among such possibilities even as the

> One precious, tender-hearted scroll
> Of pure Simonides

of which Wordsworth dreamed and sang. It is well enough when one's attempts in an untried field are lost or safely locked up in one's drawer; it is another matter when one's precious bantling appears between boards or is hung in an exhibition room. Then one wonders at one's

temerity and begins to think that the cynical old world is right when it avers that a shoemaker should stick to his last.

II

It is time, however, for me to make the reasons for my circumambulations unequivocally plain. I am merely, not so much whistling for want of thought, as talking to get my courage up. I want to desert the chair for the desk or the pulpit—only for a few moments, it is true, but my hesitation is none the less genuine. Preaching in season is something we are at least inured to, preaching out of season is what we all resent, clerics perhaps most of men. Even a President of the United States sermonizes at his peril, much more an humble professor. But a sermon, after the "firstly" has rung its knell, is less formidable than a sermon that has proceeded some minutes without a text to stand on, yet with infinite possibilities of dragging its slow length along.

You will find my text in a line of Cowper's "Task" (I. 749) which runs:—

God made the country and man made the town.

This text I wish to apply to an educational problem quite different from any that Cowper dis-

cussed in his "Tirocinium." We have heard much of late about the prospective disappearance of the small college, which in its ideal state is essentially a rural or a village institution. I am not such a partisan of the small college as to affirm that God made it and that man made the great urban university, nor do I intend to discuss upon normal lines the question of its prolonged existence and usefulness. While I believe that the high school is bound for more and more of our young men and women to fill the function performed by the gymnasium of the Germans and to furnish all the preliminary training that is needed for university studies in the arts, the sciences, and the professions, and while I believe further that in many colleges the shortening of the course, that is now permitted to exceptional students, and the blending of professional and strictly academic studies in the curriculum that leads to a bachelor's degree, will produce a radical change in the work of culture for which such colleges stand, I see no reason why this vast country with its many social strata, its inequalities of wealth, its variety of inhabiting stocks, its chaos of ideals—a chaos none the less real for the true unity of sentiments and aspirations that underlie the indefinite something we denominate Americanism—should not find ample use for all the small colleges now in exist-

ence and for more than are likely to be founded in the near future.

In other words, I suspect that the so-called problem of the small college and the university is not so much a phase of the universal problem involved in the catch expression, "the survival of the fittest," as it is a phase of the equally universal problem set before all persons and institutions that have an ideal to live up to. It would be nearer the mark, perhaps, to say that these two problems have their bases in the fact that one and the same truth is looked at from opposite sides. Persons and institutions that live up to their ideals are, in the large, the fittest to survive, and do survive. And in very real ways the college and the university help one another to survive. We are probably inclined to over-emphasize one of these ways—the passing of students from the college to the university. That is important, but, as I have said, the chances seem to be that the college-trained university student will occupy in time to come a less and less important position as compared with the school-trained student. We may flatter ourselves that he will always occupy a more aristocratic position because he will come to the university bearing the stamp of an institution possessing traditions and an *esprit de corps* that no public high-school is likely to develop. But

aristocratic positions may be a positive disadvantage in a vast commercial democracy or a huge socialistic state, and what sort of political entity America will be in a hundred years no living man is wise enough to know. It seems wiser—at least for the present—to look at another beneficial relation that obtains between the college and the university—the relation involved in the fact that more and more the college faculties are being manned by specially trained university students.

III

Here again, of course, we find ourselves confronted with the phenomena of a process of evolution. The old college professor, who was only too likely to be a broken down or unsuccessful clergyman, but was also in many cases a man of genial culture, is rapidly being displaced by scholars of more special equipment, though often with less experience of life and less adaptability to their responsible positions. Even if the college should play a less important part in the future than it has played in the past, the opportunity of the college professor to make for the spread of true culture must continue to be great, and it is a matter of considerable moment to the country if the college faculties are to-day being recruited from men whose training has

been necessarily passing from the broad to the narrow rather than from the narrow to the broad. Fortunately, however, life is like a battle—it is very seldom fought out on precisely the plans previously formed, it seldom fails to call for many a departure from the lines of method in which its participants have been trained. In teaching, as in everything else, the spirit counts for more than the letter, and it is upon the spirit in which you young scholars should leave the university, as most of you must do in the nature of things, and take up your work in the colleges that I wish to dwell for the remainder of this academic sermon. I shall speak mainly to those whose lot is likely to be cast in the rural college or in the large private boarding school rather than to those who are likely to enter city colleges or high-schools, because at present the former class, if not still the more numerous, has at least more of a tradition to keep up, and because remarks that fit the one class will be applicable with but slight modification to the other.

Leaving a great university involves giving up many advantages, among which may be enumerated the opportunity to frequent large libraries, laboratories, museums, theaters, and similar public institutions, the general stimulating energy and movement of city life, and last but not least,

the special inspiration imparted by contact with a vast body of workers in one's own sphere of activity. I have known few students who did not want to stay in the metropolis. I have never failed to recommend their going to a small college or a good school as preferable to their taking a minor position in a university. I recognize that the university position affords certain marked facilities for the training of scholars, and occasionally furnishes the opportunity for distinguished and speedy academic advancement; but I think that the teacher and the man are more important than the scholar, and I doubt whether the university is so good an agent for the making of teachers and men after they have ceased to be students, as the college or the school. The university, in my judgment, tends to overpower, to dwarf the individual, to normalize him, to urbanize him. His manners and clothes gain greatly from this process; I doubt whether his mind and character gain in like measure. In our profession, as in that of literature, it is a good thing to grow up in the provinces and sometimes to live there always, with only an occasional visit to the urban centers. True, the provinces are narrowing, they produce a plentiful crop of commonplace and eccentric people. But they afford more leisure, more retirement, more opportunity for individual thought upon

life and its problems; they make more requisition on our social capacities; they put less premium on specialization. All things considered, my judgment is that the country is a better nurse of strong character than the city, the college than the university. I suppose many would deny this; but, the longer I live the less I am impressed with the essential independence of the mind and character molded by large cities and large institutions. It is independence, thoughtfulness, creative energy, and versatility that one should mainly want to see every student display. Accuracy of scholarship and neatness of method, and general urbanity rank below these qualities, and I think there is more chance of the greater qualities being developed by the man or woman that leaves the university than by the man or woman that stays.

This belief of mine, which I hold in spite of numerous experiences tending to disprove it, has been strengthened by some recent utterances of men in comparatively high positions—utterances which could scarcely have been made by men much in the habit of doing that unfashionable something known as meditating. Action, as you are well aware, is the watchword of this transcendent generation. One almost trembles when one dares to suggest that thinking has a modest part to play in life, public or private—es-

pecially when one reads in the newspapers letters proposing that laws be passed to punish all who dare to criticise men in high stations. Some day a sapient person will perceive that the best way to put an end to unpleasant criticism is to pass a law against thinking. If you think nothing, good or bad, you are sure to acquiesce in the wisdom of all the powers that be—political, ecclesiastical, academic. And the powers that be, with their natural bent for observing the laws, will be equally innocent of thought, and will have all their time for action. Then surely, in our expressive parlance, we shall "make things hum."

But a truce to such treasonable remarks. Everybody knows that in this fortunate country no important action takes place that is not dictated by the *vox populi,* which is only another name for the voice or the wisdom of God, even when it appears to be megaphoned, to apply the words of Milton, through the seven-fold possession of a desperate stupidity. All that I wish to remark is that I think the *vox hominis* is a little more respectable than the *vox populi,* and that if you will use well the opportunities for study and reflection afforded you in a small college, you will have a very good chance, when you do talk, to talk with the voice of a man.

IV

Now for a few words with regard to the drawbacks of the small college position and the way in which they may be faced without great risk of losing the advantages afforded by the position.

I suppose that we should all place first the wearing number of hours of instruction and the wide range of subjects. This is an evil inseparable from small endowments, but one that is being diminished in the older and wealthier colleges. Like all other inevitable evils it should be borne with as much cheerful patience as possible. Observe, however, that it generally comes when one is young and strong, that it tests one's endurance, makes one combat one's laziness, and helps to develop one's versatility, one's resources, one's powers of self-preservation. I am a living proof that it is possible to teach eighteen hours a week in a bewildering range of subjects—I blush to say that at a pinch I have been known to teach, besides all the English branches, classes in history and political economy, French and German, mathematics and the history of the English law of real property —I repeat that it is possible to teach a multitude of subjects and not completely lose one's health

or one's self-respect. It is even possible at the same time to do some writing and editing. The way to do it is not difficult. Avoid much thinking or talking about what you have to undertake, but when you see that a thing needs doing and that people look to you to do it, go ahead and trust in Providence to bring you out with something accomplished. Dunning, the great lawyer, a member of Johnson's club, said that a third of his immense business was done by himself, a third got itself done, and a third never got done at all. I suspect that he was a very wise man. All hard workers, as a matter of course, will grow weary and brood and play the martyr; but if they manage to be in the main good-natured and energetic, they will be able some day to look back on a good deal of fair accomplishment, and although they will be ready to admit that they made mistakes every day and wrote and said and did things of which they were later ashamed, they would have been much more ashamed if they had not displayed "the courage of imperfection" and done their best under trying circumstances.

Now you see there is very little about the over-work of a college instructor that is new to me, and I can tell you honestly that I do not regret my trials. I learned much about human nature that I could never have got in any other

way, I learned to work, to save time, to carry several things together; but the best of it all was that there was little danger after all that training that I should lie awake at night wondering whether I had offended this or that student in my classes, or let a typographical error slip by in my last article. It seems to me that a small college is a very good place to get a fairly sensible philosophy of working and living. So make up your minds that there is a real jewel in this particular toad's head of adversity, and remember that the only true receipt to follow under the circumstances is—think as little of yourself as you conveniently can and as much as you can of the needs of the institution and your students. You are sure to get on then, and, as the years go by, the chances grow less and less that the excessive dissipation of energy in a large variety of interests, from which I undoubtedly suffered, will be required in an American college. I may add that, of course, a certain amount of method in one's use of time is necessary, but that there is no laying down rules. Some people work by bits, some by great stretches. Some take their rest and amusement by rule and measure; others follow up a spell of labor by a spell of incubating. All that you must work out for yourselves. Only remember that perhaps the main secret of efficient work lies in

a borrowed phrase I have already used, "the courage of imperfection"; and that that involves a lack of self-conceit. The man who refrains from doing a thing because probably he will not do it to his own liking is not in my opinion often actuated by the artist's desire of perfection, but is actuated by the fear of censure that so dominates the self-conscious and the conceited man.

Next to overwork I suppose we must place the lack of the appliances of culture—especially of books in sufficient quanity. Here again I have had plenty of experience, but I have always managed to surmount my difficulties. I was careful in buying for myself—getting fundamental books and seeing that they covered certain topics fairly well. I went as far as I could go in any line of research, and then waited patiently to reach a library or else got friends in other places to lend me books. Fortunately there has been a great extension of the facilities for obtaining such loans since my early days. I made up my mind that doing my teaching as well as I could and not doing work involving research was the business of nine months out of the year. And, finally, I could always afford to have books to read. What is lacking in such a situation as mine was and as yours may be, is books to refer to. Few men in these days of cheap books have occasion to complain that they

cannot get enough to read. And here is a beautiful compensation. The scholar, strictly speaking, is often very ill-read. You as a teacher rather than a scholar can read widely if you will, and your work as a teacher and your character as a man will improve with judicious and wide reading and, in important respects, you will often be better off than many a university instructor. You will have fewer distractions, too —such as the theater—and, books being a little more seriously taken in the provinces, you will be less exposed to the danger of becoming a dilettante or an amateur. I have noticed among men in large universities a tendency to amateurish reading or else to grinding, mechanical scholarship. Wide, sane reading makes the fuller man, and you can do such reading even in the smallest college. You may publish fewer monographs and special articles, but when you do get a chance to do a piece of research, it will have qualities all the larger if you have read widely. And by all means labor to make your college library better; for thinking of those who are to come after you will keep you from brooding too much over your own lack of appliances. I may add that the small college library often brings one into more intimate contact with books than is possible in a large library. One is not swamped by them—one can

easily get the run of the library in several departments. One can handle more books and much may be picked up in that way. Finally, in this matter of reading, let me emphasize two points. Read all the time you are not teaching, playing, eating and sleeping. I mean this almost literally, if you can stand it. Tuck in your five minutes here and your ten minutes there, unless you are sure you can employ them better in thought, as you often can. In the next place, do not be discouraged at what you forget and do not fail every now and then to calculate how small the number of books you could read if you read ten hours a day for sixty years—small I mean as compared with the number a wide-awake reader would like to read. And keep up all the languages you have and live in the hope of adding to them—even if you have to admit that you will probably be eighty, like Cato, before you begin Greek.

V

A third drawback to work in a small college is what I may call in general the cramping environment. Though I have already said that I regard the city as perhaps more cramping so far as concerns original thought, it would be folly not to admit that the country and the small town have their own ways of cramping. There

is much temptation to become lazy and humdrum, and many college professors yield to it. The chief correctives are love of work, living to a certain extent your own intellectual life, keeping up with literature, seizing legitimate opportunities to travel. There is a superfluity of gossip in a small place, and that means that sooner or later you will wonder at the meanness of men. You will keep on wondering both at their meanness and at their foolishness, but trying not to be mean one's self will always take one's mind off the injury another's meanness has done one. It is pleasanter and safer to think of the many kind deeds of which one has been the object and to remember that hearts are made to ache everywhere, and that, although a mean man is perhaps less easily avoided in a small faculty than in a large, if you attend to your business, you will have little to complain of. And one great advantage you will have. Men and women may be mean and stupid, but boys and girls are generally the reverse of mean, and their fresh qualities make up in a measure for their stupidity. You can more than make up for the cramping gossip of the small place by having a more intimate contact with your students than is usually possible in a large university. No matter where you go—North, South, East or West—you have a splendid opportunity

here. You may never do much to extend the bounds of knowledge, but how much you may do to extend the bounds of character—to make the new generation advance upon the old! This is the noblest thing connected with learning—this handing on the torch. I need not dwell on it, but I must say that next to the family relations those established between teacher and student seem to me the loveliest and truest. What are a host of articles one has written if one has taught all one's life without having made a host of real friends? I think that there is no reason why you should not make friends by your teaching and also friends by your books; but by all means make friends somehow. Only let me remind you that friends made by any derogation from your office are not worth having. I have watched this carefully, and I have never seen the rule fail. Any carelessness with students as to the college regulations with regard to cards, drinking, or what not—any questionable conversation—and you forfeit some of their respect. They want us to respect ourselves and our office. They do not want us to talk about athletics and betray our real ignorance of the subject. They may laugh at a questionable joke, but they will take it out on us in private. They want us to be true to them, and we cannot be that unless we are first true to ourselves.

I am aware that this is very didactic, but that is what I started out to be. And, to continue, you will avoid the mistake of trying to conceal your ignorance—who can?—and that rarer, almost worse mistake, if you are dealing with older students, of trying to reserve some of your knowledge in order to publish it or exploit it in some way for your own behoof. The only thing a true teacher has a right to deny to any of his pupils is an exhibition of the bad side of his own character. I do not mean by this that he should be at all hypocritical. I mean only that we all have faults and angularities, and that we ought to try to keep these from offending our students in any way. To our knowledge, our zeal, our time they have full claim—and above all to our sympathy. And here let me call your attention to one special danger which I have observed in more than one place at close range. If you find that you have a strong influence on any student or set of students, it may become your duty to check that influence at a certain point, even if you have to suffer a wrench in doing it. The relation of master and disciple is a beautiful one, if the master continues always to respect the disciple's individuality, and the disciple respects himself. But, when the teacher makes himself the center of a circle of flattering student admirers, when he seeks to impress his ideas of

literature and life upon them instead of trying to develop them into independent seekers after truth, he loses sight, I think, of the true meaning of education, which is a drawing forth of the character implicit in every child and youth, not a grafting or substitution of another character. I frankly say that I think the presence in any college or university of a strong personality that in whole or in part spends its strength in producing immature copies of itself is a source of danger. A true stimulator, a true maker of men is a blessing; but I do not believe in the teacher who

> Like Cato gives his little Senate laws
> And sits attentive to his own applause.

From Plato to Pater this sort of teacher has been known in the world, and, while he has often created beautiful things in literature, he has generally managed to raise ugly, if unjust, suspicions about his own manliness, and that of his intimate disciples. There is such a thing as over-intimacy between teacher and pupil. There is such a thing as settling down on a youth's individuality and vampire-like sucking all the life out of it. Any really high-minded man would scorn to be surrounded by flatterers, and would shun the temptation to try to make out of his pupils anything but strong, independent

men and women. Is not the respect and love of a few such worth all the adulation, all the trumpeting, and all the advertising in the world? And is it not a sign of doubt as to our own strength and largeness if we cannot devote ourselves to training up men and women to surpass us in our own lines if they can? Any teacher who is capable of being jealous of his pupils, who is afraid to see them grow up to their full stature or to have them come under the influence of other teachers, is truly pitiable. But there are such teachers, and my warning is not useless.

I might go on giving you advice forever, and flattering myself that I was merely indulging in the privilege of lengthened utterance claimed by the preachers of old, but you would soon give me ocular demonstration that times have changed. So I will add but one bit of counsel. It seems to me to be a very good thing to have some piece of writing going on even if you can find but an hour a week to devote to it. Write an address for a literary society or club, accept invitations to speak throughout the State, write an occasional review—in other words, do not neglect creative work of whatever kind, for the time may come when you will have to do or will want to do not a little of it. And have at least one line of reading on which you do practically no writing or talking. It supples the mind and

furnishes the needed element of distinterested culture. Always to read pencil in hand and card-catalogue in reach is deadening. Always to talk and never to write promotes garrulity, and not a little slipshodness. And now, checking my own garrulity, I will end as I began by assuring you that life outside a great center has its special advantages and that its peculiar disadvantages can undoubtedly be neutralized in part. There is a fine field of work before you in the colleges and schools, and, when you return, in whatever capacity, to your university *alma mater,* you will find your old teachers, with their beards growing grayer each year, delighted to hear of your success.

X

THE CENTENARY OF POE

[Delivered before the Johns Hopkins University on January 19, 1909, at the exercises in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of Poe's death.]

I

PROBABLY not a few of you traveling in Europe have kept your eyes open for evidences of interest in things American, and perhaps in American literature. If you have, your eyes may have lighted, as mine did not many months ago, on a copy of a French translation of some of Poe's tales, wretchedly printed, in yellow paper covers adorned with a repelling woodcut of the author. I saw my copy in a small bookshop on the Corso in Rome, and standing next to it was an equally unattractive copy of a French translation of some of Byron's poems. The juxtaposition naturally suggested a certain train of reflections. Poe and Byron, although they number more Continental readers than most of the writers that have used the English tongue, are precisely the two writers of commanding position against whom the harshest criticism has been directed by an influential portion of the public of their respective and respectable countries. That this is true of Byron will be admitted by most persons acquainted with modern British criticism. If you doubt it, you may read the pages devoted to the poet in Professor

George Saintsbury's volume on English literature in the nineteenth century, pages which leave one wondering just how eccentric a critic may be without losing his reputation. It might be difficult to cull from any American critic of equal standing with Professor Saintsbury utterances with regard to Poe quite so extraordinary as those of the British critic with regard to Byron, but it is easy to show that, like Byron, Poe has been subjected to what, in view of his high position abroad, is an astonishing amount of harsh criticism from his own countrymen.

Emerson, for example, is reported to have called the writer whom many Americans consider the greatest author yet produced in this country, "the jingle man." Poe did write "The Bells," and he managed to put a great deal of their "jingling and tinkling" into his poem, or his metrical *tour de force,* if one prefers so to designate it—but he also wrote in his youth those stanzas beginning "Helen, thy beauty is to me" which are as magically harmonious, at least in their opening, as any lines I can recall from any other American poet. This haunting, beautiful poem, to the symmetry of which Lowell paid tribute, did not suffice to bear Poe aloft into Emerson's "Parnassus," but the stanzas that compose it have sung themselves a home in thousands of hearts.

Lowell, who has just been cited as a witness for the defense, must also be called by the prosecution. In famous lines, he brought Poe along with his "Raven" like Barnaby Rudge:—

> Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge.

Perhaps your well-to-do citizen, after a prosperous day and a good dinner, might be inclined, with Mr. Burchell of "The Vicar of Wakefield," to cry out "Fudge, fudge!" on hearing some one repeat the stanza:—

> For, alas! alas! with me
> The light of Life is o'er!
> No more—no more—no more!—
> (Such language holds the solemn sea
> To the sands upon the shore)
> Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
> Or the stricken eagle soar.

But the man with a feeling for highly emotional poetry and an ear for the rhythms in which such poetry should be couched, is not likely, I think, to underrate these appealing verses.

Lowell and Emerson represent, however, a former generation, and so does the notorious ballot for the ten best or favorite American books taken a good many years ago by the weekly journal *The Critic,* a ballot in which Poe did not even manage to come in at the foot of the poll. But fully twenty years later I find a

modern American critic writing about Poe's "unlimited scholarly ignorance"—whatever that may mean—and it is in this twentieth century that I myself have had to conduct a correspondence with the principal of a school in one of our greatest States who regretted that he could not permit my "History of American Literature" to enter his school library for the reason—not that I had treated Poe too harshly or too favorably—but that I had treated him at all. School children, according to my correspondent, ought not to know that such a life as Poe's was ever lived.

But this, you may say, is too bizarre an experience to be made the basis of any sort of argument. Perhaps so, but it is not my sole experience of the kind. I have also had to correspond with a teacher on the other side of the Continent—where to us effete Easterners there seems to be no dearth of the materials for thrilling adventure—on the unwholesome effects upon youthful minds of the excitement created by the perusal of Poe's stories. And—that I may balance a Southern experience with these from the North and West—I have had a colleague, a Southerner of great culture and scholarship, whose name would be familiar to many of you, tell me that he had been obliged to decline an invitation to write an essay on Poe because, being a Southerner, he did not wish to undertake

the invidious task of showing how badly the author of "The Fall of the House of Usher" usually wrote. And, coming back to the North, only the other day a colleague said to me, with a slight note of glee in his voice, "I've just read Blank's article on Poe in manuscript, it will appear in the — number of ———. I tell you, he just rips Poe up the back." I got my colleague to admit, before we parted, that when writers of Poe's caliber and standing are ripped up the back by modern critics, two features of the phenomenon may be predicated as fairly constant. One is that the rip nearly always follows the line of a previous rip; the other is that, as a rule, the victim's admirers are unconscious of the fact that any ripping has taken place. I submit, in the light of my reading and my personal experiences, that we do not need ballots for *The Critic,* or the Hall of Fame to convince us that, even in this centennial year, Poe's admirers in America have still something of a task before them if they wish, as they must wish, to make his fame in his native land at all commensurate with his achievements, as these are viewed by the world at large.

II

Yes, there is still much to do, but has not a great deal been accomplished? Not quite sixty

years, that is, not quite two generations, have passed since Poe died under deplorable circumstances here in this city of Baltimore, which, if I may so phrase it, is the center of the mystery which still surrounds his life, and which, in consequence, should be the center of future investigations of his interesting career. When he died in his forty-first year his national reputation was not inconsiderable, though in many respects unfavorable, and, in a small way, the foundations had been laid for his international fame. There were also incipient signs of the formation of a cult. Taking everything into consideration—Poe's antecedents and temperament, his financial status, the comparatively unpropitious environment in which he lived and wrote—we may fairly hold that in his short life he accomplished as editor, critic, story-teller, and poet a rather exceptional amount of work which produced upon his contemporaries much more than an average impression. In other words, Poe is no exception to the rule that the writers who really count began by counting with their contemporaries. We may hold more than this, however. Many a writer has established for himself by the time of his death a greater fame than Poe had secured by 1849, and then has slowly lost it, in whole or in part, without having experienced two great drawbacks such as speedily fell

to the lot of Poe. We must remember that it was his fate to be read for many years in an unattractive edition prepared by a somewhat unsympathetic editor, whose name has been anathema to the poet's admirers, but upon whom it is no longer necessary or even just to pour forth the vials of our wrath. It was also Poe's fate to have that period of detraction which usually follows a writer's death coincide with a period of civil discord and confusion in which literature was bound to suffer and did suffer greatly. After the war was over, the work of material and political reconstruction took its natural precedence. It may therefore be said without exaggeration that thoroughly normal conditions for the spread of a writer's fame have existed in this country only for a space of about thirty years. During these years our sense of nationality has been immensely developed, and we have consequently taken a greater interest and pride in our literature. Poe, with other writers of the past, has naturally profited from these propitious conditions, but here again fate has been somewhat untoward to him. His early biographers and critics tended to become either extravagantly eulogistic or unduly captious, and the weight of authority lay, for some years, with the unduly captious. For obvious reasons, American literature was synonymous to a ma-

jority of readers with New England literature, and it would have been little short of a miracle if the admirers and exponents of the latter literature had greatly relished or indeed thoroughly understood the works of a man who had not himself too well comprehended the merits of the literature they loved and represented. Poe's fame, therefore, became too much of a sectional or a partisanly individual matter and too little of a national matter, when all the while, thanks in part to his lack of local, that is of untranslatable flavor, in part to the extraordinarily sympathetic comprehension of Baudelaire, in part to literary conditions obtaining in France, it was becoming an international matter.

Shall we pause here to indulge in words of blame or regret? I think not. Poe's attitude toward New England and its writers was almost predetermined, and it has not seriously hurt either. Their attitude toward him has doubtless somewhat retarded the spread of his fame and his influence in America; but it has also stimulated the zeal of his admirers, and it has tested as with fire the gold of his genius. Without such testing would his countrymen be celebrating this centenary of his birth with so much enthusiasm, with so much really national, not sectional, spontaneity, with so much confidence in the permanent worth of the achievements of the man

they commemorate? When I speak of the enthusiasm with which people are celebrating his centenary, I am not, of course, indulging in the delusion that this academic paper I am reading will pass with any of you as a Swinburnian outburst of dithyrambic eulogy. All I am trying to do is to emphasize the widespread and genuine interest this one hundredth anniversary of Poe's birth has aroused throughout the country, and to point out the fact that, as a student of literary history, I see in the phenomenon one of the best proofs that could be furnished of Poe's possession of a true and unique genius. If that genius were as decadent, as meretricious, as paltry, as some critics would have us think it, should we not be obliged to consider a larger number of our fellow-citizens gulled or demented than it would be at all comfortable to believe? If that genius had not added materially to the world's pleasure and profit, is it likely that in sixty years, more than half of which have just been shown to have been distinctly unpropitious to Poe's fame in America, his works would have been more carefully and fully annotated than those of any other American writer? There is enough interest and pathos and mystery in his biography to account for the study devoted to Poe the man; but I am very doubtful whether the popular and scholarly editions of his works would have in-

creased as they have done within our own generation, to say nothing of such evidence of his fame as the multiplication of critical essays and monographs and the high prices paid for first editions of his books, if, despite his limitations, Poe had not been, besides a waif of fortune, the most unalloyed specimen of that indescribable something called æsthetic genius yet produced in this new world. Yes—a great deal has been accomplished in sixty years. It has been made practically certain that Poe's fame is as permanent and luminous as a star, even if the star still shines out upon us from behind light clouds.

The fact that Poe, despite many limitations and drawbacks, among which we must count the comparatively brief span of his creative activity —he was writing not much more than twenty years—should have gained a position among American authors which in the eyes of most Europeans and of many of his own countrymen is, to say the least, second to none, is probably the most important fact that can be emphasized upon this centennial occasion. It is a cause for congratulation in more senses than one. The triumph of genius over untoward conditions always makes a profound appeal to generous natures. Fame seems to do her most salutary work when she dresses the balance. And when, dress-

ing the balance, she conquers prejudices, especially those prejudices that divide classes and sections, she does a profoundly moral work. Poe long since exchanged "these voices" for "peace."

> He has outsoared the shadow of our night.
> Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
> And that unrest which men miscall delight,
> Can touch him not, and torture not again.

What are our praise or blame to him? But what are they not to ourselves? He can dispense with editions and monographs, with monuments and portraits and celebrations. We cannot dispense with them because they are needed for the full expression of those sentiments of sympathy and gratitude, of generosity and justice, without which we should be unworthy of our heritage of civilization. Yes—the fact that in two generations we as a people have made a not inconsiderable progress toward attaining an adequately sympathetic and just appreciation of the life and works of the poet we are honoring tonight is a fact we can scarcely overemphasize, a fact for which we can scarcely be too thankful.

III

If, however, we would be thoroughly just, we must take some account of what the men and

women who do not join us in honoring Poe or are grudging in their praise have to say in their own behalf. Why is it that the author of one of the best books we have on our poet told someone that he had to take a trip to Italy in order to get the taste of Poe out of his mouth? A Frenchman got satisfaction from praying to Poe, but although Poe is generally believed to have been born in Boston and although that city is the home of almost every sect known to man, I have yet to hear of the erection of a Poe shrine in the place of his nativity. What are we to think of this divergence? Shall we merely shrug our shoulders and ejaculate "De gustibus non est disputandum—there is no arguing about tastes"? Probably this is the most prudent method of procedure, but it is much more certain that it is the laziest and perhaps the most cowardly, and I somehow do not like to take it.

Perhaps in considering the case against Poe it will be well to revert for a moment to the parallel between him and Byron with which we began. The standing of both poets has been considerably lowered with their respective countrymen, indeed with the entire Anglo-Saxon reading public, by features of their characters and careers which have not greatly counted with Continental readers. We may say, if we choose, that many Englishmen and Americans have

judged Byron and Poe by puritanical standards, or we may say that a sound instinct of moral self-preservation has led the British and the American public to withhold its allegiance, in whole or in part, from men and writers whose examples and whose works scarcely seemed to make for individual or collective righteousness and happiness. Let us comment on the phenomenon as we please, but let us not blink it. Byron and Poe have been and are constantly judged by moral standards, and they have suffered in consequence both as men and as writers. But they have been judged at the same time by literary standards, and here the parallel seems to break down. Criticism adverse to Byron tends to center in the charge that he had too little art; criticism adverse to Poe tends to center in the charge that he had too much art. The one poet is pronounced to be over-copious, coarse, and slipshod; the other to be costive, over-refined, decadent. The question at once arises—are British and American readers sincere upholders of what we may call a golden-mean æsthetic standard, or are they rather to be classed in the main as partisan pleaders bent upon making their case as strong as they can? How is it that so many European readers manage to accept both the copious, inartistic Byron and the scrupulous, limited Poe? Is it that they have no standards

moral or æsthetic, or that they have other standards than ours, or that all these questions I am asking are beside the point?

Perhaps the last question touches the root of the matter. Shall we not, all of us, settle down as peaceable impressionists liking what we like and disliking what we dislike and, in the language of the street, "letting it go at that"? A comfortable suggestion indeed. Acting upon it, we could all exclaim "Glory to Poe!" and go home. But again that suspicion that I may be giving way to laziness and cowardliness creeps over me. Can we afford "to let it go at that"? I think not.

Suppose for the moment we allow the unfriendly biographers of Poe to have it all their own way. Let us not dispute a single point. What have we left? In my judgment, the most interesting, the most pathetic, and in some ways the most instructive of all American biographies. What we Americans seem always to demand of a biography is that it should be exemplary and inspiring. This the biography of Poe certainly is not, except in so far as there is true inspiration to be gained from the contemplation of a life so steadily devoted, amid drawbacks and vicissitudes, to the unflinching pursuit of clearly recognized artistic ideals. But, granted that on

the side of moral conduct Poe's life is sadly lacking in inspiration, are we such cowards that we cannot face the unpleasant, the uncanny side of life? Can we afford to confine our sympathies to orthodox, and exemplary subjects and occasions? Have we so little motive power in ourselves that we must ever be seeking inspiration from without—especially inspiration of the smug, successful, well-to-do variety? Let us have the exemplary and the inspiring by all means, but let us remember that man does not live by approbation and aspiration alone. On that sort of emotional diet he might soon become cowardly and selfish. Man lives by interest and curiosity, or he grows dull and commonplace; he lives by alert comprehension, or he soon falls a victim to the malevolent forces of life; and, if he does not often, in the words of Gray:—

> Ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears,

he speedily becomes an arid and unlovely creature. I repeat that we all need to be brought in contact with the interesting, the pathetic, the warningly instructive, and that I know of few better ways to secure this desirable contact than by studying with intelligent sympathy the life of Poe.

IV

But is it necessary to yield to the unfavorable biographers of Poe all the points they make? "Of course not," replies the partisan biographer, who immediately proceeds to yield as little as he can. This is an entirely human procedure, but it has obvious disadvantages, and perhaps it will be well to try to approach our problem from another point of view. How much do we really know about Poe's life? At first thought it would appear that we know a good deal. We have several elaborate biographies, and since the appearance of Professor Woodberry's volume in 1885 it has been possible to say that modern methods of thorough and comparatively unpartisan investigation have been applied to the study of Poe's life. Whatever Professor Woodberry's defects of sympathy, I do not see how anyone can test his book minutely, as I have done, without making the frank acknowledgment that his labors mark an important epoch in Poe scholarship.[1] As for the interest that is taken in Poe's life,

[1] Since this was written Mr. Woodberry has expanded his earlier work into two volumes, which will be found indispensable to students. Some new light is thrown by them on dark places in Poe's life, but I do not think that the additional information conveyed necessitates any substantial change in my text.

that is really immense, and it is increasing, as anyone who keeps a Poe scrap-book will testify. No details seem too small to report, and, if possible, to argue over. But, despite the apparent wealth of material, are we in a position to say that we know enough about Poe to give an entirely adequate and authoritative account of his life? I cannot answer this question for others, but I can answer it for myself. About five years ago I was engaged in writing a biography of Poe which I had carried down to the year 1837. I stopped there, and I have not added a line to it since, because three facts were borne in upon me. The first was that there were batches of letters and papers in existence which presumably threw important light upon Poe's life, but which for the time being I was not able to examine. The second was that I was not satisfied that a sufficiently thorough study had been made of the newspapers published during certain years in at least six cities. The third was that from the spring of 1831 to the autumn of 1833 Poe's life was practically a blank, and that it was therefore impossible to say what facts were in lurking ready to affect my interpretation of the whole course of his after life. If the Poe who won the prize of $100 in October, 1833, for his story "The MS. Found in a Bottle" was morally and socially the same Poe who got himself

dismissed from West Point in March, 1831—if the obscure years marked only a period of intellectual and artistic development such as might have been normally expected, and if they concealed no experiences essentially different from those recorded between the years 1825 to 1831 and 1834 to 1849, then it seemed possible to construct a biography which would at least stand the test of the readers and students who accepted my points of view. But suppose the Poe of 1833 was quite a different Poe in some respects from the Poe of 1831; then it was entirely possible that a biography constructed on the theory that he was essentially the same Poe might not stand even subsequent tests applied to it by its naturally partial author. Although the obscure period was a short one, it came at an important point, and it seemed better to stop and begin investigating. A series of accidents carried me back two centuries and over to England, and instead of investigating Poe I got entangled with an even more mysterious and remarkable person who lived at Stoke Newington a century before Poe went to school there—to wit, Daniel Defoe, the author of "Robinson Crusoe." But, however little right a deserter may have to preach investigation to Poe students, that must be the burden of my counsel. We must not suppose for one instant that we yet have sufficient material

for passing a definite and final judgment upon Poe the man. An important batch of letters has just seen the light. There are, as I happen to know, other letters extant that possess distinct value, and there is the chance that facts of more or less importance may come to light from diaries and newspapers.

Let me illustrate somewhat concretely what I mean. Poe's life in the city of Richmond falls into four main periods—his early childhood, his school days from August, 1820, to February, 1826; his editorial connection with the *Southern Literary Messenger* from the middle of 1835 to the beginning of 1837,[1] and his visit from July to the end of September, 1849, just before he went to Baltimore to die. A fair amount of light has been thrown upon his social status during three of these periods, but almost nothing is known about it during the months when he was editor of the *Messenger*. Old schoolmates who were living in the city during those months pass over the period in their reminiscences written in after years. We may accept his own statement that his friends received him with open arms, or we may believe that poverty and hard work and the hostility of an influential family

[1] See on this point an interesting letter from Poe communicated by Professor Killis Campbell to *The Nation* for July 1, 1909.

and other causes led to a comparative social obscuration. We do not know clearly how his habits affected his relations with his former friends and his new employer, the proprietor of the *Messenger;* the circumstances of his marriage with his child-cousin Virginia are distinctly mysterious; there is a possibility that the dark Baltimore period may have extended its shadow over this Richmond period. Even with regard to a matter which it would seem should have been thoroughly investigated long ago, viz: his editorial management of the *Messenger* as that is revealed in the pages of the magazine itself, it may be fairly held that the facts have not yet been thoroughly sifted and given to the world. I think I do not exaggerate when I say both that there is need of additional and close study of the material we have already amassed, and that there is a chance that some stray entry in a diary or a reference in a letter may throw light on this or that dark period in the narrative and thus help us to a clearer conception of Poe's character. I know at least that in my own study of that charaacter I have been checking myself at almost every step with the query—Is there a sufficient basis for this inference?

There is another point about another Richmond period that may bear mentioning. Poe is usually depicted for us as a romantically melan-

choly and lonely boy. We are told about his haunting the grave of Mrs. Stanard by night. We picture him as a sensitive orphan child, proud, misunderstood, yearning for sympathy. How far this exceptional boyhood helps distinguished psychological pathologists to give us a scientific diagnosis of the disease or diseases under which Poe labored, I am not competent to say. Perhaps I ought not to take up my biography again until I have acquired an M.D. degree, for to judge from the way some gentlemen are writing and talking, "great wits" are not merely "to madness near allied," but they are diseased from head to toe and from the cradle to the grave. I am not prepared to dispute that, if Poe really haunted Mrs. Stanard's grave for nights, he was suffering from some sort of morbid affection; but I am inclined to wonder whether a poetical story which seems to be supported only by Poe's own testimony given about twenty-five years after the supposed event ought to be taken seriously and whether we have any real warrant for representing Poe down to the time he entered the University of Virginia as a very abnormal boy. It is at least curious that after a pretty careful piecing together of all the information I was able to gather with regard to Poe's school days in Richmond, I should have been left with the impression that, if we did not

read into the period notions derived from our study of his antecedents and of his life from his seventeenth year to his death, we should have scarcely a verifiable fact to cause us to suspect that he was not a normal boy. I may even add that the information accessible with regard to his sports and the light thrown upon Richmond life by the newspapers of the time left me surprised at the points of resemblance that could be discovered between boy life in Richmond in 1824 and that of 1874, which I myself could well remember. Here again I do not wish to seem unduly insistent upon my own points of view. I merely wish once more to ask the question whether we really know the essential facts of Poe's life and comprehend the evolution of his character as well as we think we do, and to urge upon all who are in possession of documents or family traditions likely to aid us in any way to put their information at the disposal of students. It is not fair to pass moral judgments upon the mature man about whose frailties so much is known, until we are better acquainted with the voluntary and involuntary elements that made up the formative period of his life.

V

But I am nearing the end of my allotted time and all I have done is to assert that, on the

whole, we have accomplished a good deal for Poe's fame in the past sixty years and that there is still much to do before we shall have the right to feel that we understand thoroughly the man and his life. To most people, however, it is the man's works that count, some holding that they represent the high-water-mark of American literary achievement, others maintaining that they are possessed of but slight intellectual and moral value and of only a very limited æsthetic value. What of these much-discussed works in prose and verse? Shall we ever reach anything approaching a consensus of expert and popular opinion with regard to them? Has the Poe critic as much encouragement to pursue his studies as the Poe biographer has?

All things considered, it seems to me that he has. Not only have the editions, the monographs, the essays multiplied greatly, but what is more important, Poe in the last twenty years, through small volumes of selections and through various sorts of anthologies, has made his way into the schools. We poor teachers of English are constantly belabored for the supposititious inefficiency of our methods of instruction; but I am vastly mistaken if, thanks partly to us, there is not a much larger amount of intelligent reading done in this country to-day by a proportionately larger number of people than was the

case twenty years ago. Reading as one of the means to aristocratic culture, has probably shown no such advance; it may even have retrograded, though I am not sure of that, except in so far as our attitude toward the great, the indispensable culture of Greece and Rome leaves me dissatisfied; but reading as a means to democratic culture has made, I believe, an advance truly extraordinary. Now these two sorts of reading seem bound to affect each other, and they are continually coming together in our schools and colleges. Provincial, sectional, crassly individualistic estimates of authors and books are held with decreasing tenacity in a country of increasing democratic culture. Schools, newspapers, lectures, and literary clubs of all sorts may seem to us, in our pessimistic moods, to be merely appliances for the dissemination of bad taste and misinformation, and they do disseminate a depressing deal of both; but, at bottom and in the large, their influence is beneficial in creating and transmitting interest and in checking extravagant individualism. These agencies, not only make for an increased reading and study of Poe and other leading American writers, but they also tend to normalize opinion about them, to render it less and less likely that bizarre judgments, whether favorable or unfavorable, will be passed upon them.

This formation of an intelligent public opinion upon literary topics is necessarily a matter of generations, and, if it ever tends to check the legitimate, reasonable play of individual taste and judgment, it will be a bad thing for us as a people. I am optimistic enough, however, to believe that our democratic culture will improve our national taste and judgment and still leave free play for individual preferences, and I count upon this culture finally to give Poe a very high, if not the highest, place among our antebellum writers. I do not think that the common sense which will always characterize democratic culture—it does not hurt any kind of culture by the way—will tolerate the notion some acute critics have tried to spread that Poe's poems and tales are not real literature after all. Such a notion means nothing unless you can define real literature. If someone were to contend, for example, that no real literature had been produced since the Iliad and the Odyssey, it might be possible to comprehend him and even to sympathize with him. If someone else were to contend that any writing or writings that continued after the lapse of a generation to attract the attention of publishers, readers and critics was real literature because it displayed vitality, it might be possible to comprehend and even to sympathize with him. But when gentlemen

calmly draw their own lines between these two extremes and say that this or that book or writer is on the no-literature side of their privately drawn line, I am tempted to inquire with what instruments and by whose authority they perform their feats of critico-engineering. While waiting for their explanations, I will venture to draw my own line and to make the not very startling assertion that Poe's work does not lie on the wrong side of it.

VI

Does this statement mean that at the close of this paper I am ranging myself with the partisans of Poe? If it does, I am quite content to take an humble place in their ranks. I doubt, however, whether it really is a partisan statement. One marked characteristic of democratic culture is its readiness to give heed to what has been done and thought in other countries and to adopt and assimilate whatever seems beneficial. Poe, on the whole, appears to have counted for the world outside of America more than any other American author. This fact is likely in time to produce more and more impression upon the minds of Poe's countrymen. It is, furthermore, a pretty plain lesson of literary history that the writer who makes the double appeal of

verse and prose, especially when much of his prose is imaginative, has more chances with posterity—more chance of being really read—than writers who make the single appeal of verse alone, or prose alone. And besides the appeal made by his verse and his prose—Poe, we must never forget, wrote the "Raven," which perhaps disputes with Gray's "Elegy" the honor, or as some disdainful, hypercritical persons would hold, the dishonor of being the most popular poem in the language—besides this appeal, Poe makes the appeal that is always made by the mysterious, ill-starred genius. Now this matter of the appeal or the appeals made by a writer is even more important than we are apt to think it at first blush. The reader and the student are already bewildered and oppressed by the number of really great and good books and writers that demand to be read. As the competition grows keener, the selective process will surely grow more drastic, and just as surely the authors of double and triple appeal are going to have a greater and greater advantage over their rivals. The comparatively small bulk of Poe's poetry and of his best tales may prevent our ranking him with certain writers of more copious genius, but this very scantiness of product may stand him in good stead centuries hence when some of his chief competitors are really known only as

Elizabethan poets, like Daniel and Drayton are now known by a selection or two in the anthologies.

No—while I have no desire to pose as a prophet, I think I am neither rash nor partisan in pointing out the advantages with which Poe seems to me to be beginning his second century. As I have said elsewhere, he claims attention in four ways. First, through his interesting, pathetic life. Secondly, through his criticism and his miscellaneous prose, which is of great importance in the history of the development of our literature, is obviously the product of an exceptionally clear and acute mind, has been found valuable by students of the art of fiction, and is based upon æsthetic ideals and a definite artistic theory, sincere and intelligent though lacking in catholicity and in a sound historical sense. Thirdly, through his fiction, which is probably unsurpassed in its peculiar kind. He is a master of the ratiocinative tale, including the detective story, which he may be said to have originated. In tales of compelling horror, of haunting mystery, of weirdly ethereal beauty, of tragic situation, of morbid analysis of conscience, he has had no clear superior, and in his attempts at the grotesque he has shown power and versatility, though in the opinion of some, little true humor. It is usual to say that his stories are remote from

life; but it is certainly true that they deal with themes and situations which have interested men since the dawn of literature. It is also said that in his stories Poe displays invention rather than imagination, but I am inclined to believe that in literature as in life, like calls to like and that it is Poe's imagination that holds our imaginations spellbound. In the construction of his stories and occasionally in his verbal style he yields to no writer of his class—in other words, he takes high rank as a conscious artist. His appeal is limited by the fact that the substance of his fiction lies apart, not precisely from life, but from ordinary human experience; but interest in the abnormal is by no means an inhuman or an unhuman characteristic, and the reception given Poe's tales in France alone would seem, after all allowances have been made, to confute the assertion often risked, that they are meretricious in conception and in execution. We can scarcely be too often reminded that Burke's warning against indicting whole peoples applies to literary matters just as well as it does to political. A people or a large body of persons may go crazy for a short time, but they do not stay crazy, and, if a book stands the test of years with any people, or considerable body of readers, the chances are that it is full of merit. I know of no more foolish conduct a critic can be guilty

of than to endeavor to demonstrate that a man who has produced and continues to produce fairly striking emotional and intellectual effects is little more than a charlatan. It is at least obvious that such critics are not charlatans, for they belong to the class of dupes—they are duped by their own overacuteness. And let us remember also that it is unsafe to pay much attention to analytical critics who would have us believe that the effects produced by a famous book or writer can be reproduced if one will only follow a formula. Such critics generally fail to recognize that they are dealing with something truly alive, and that the vital principle escapes their analysis. Bland souls, they present us with a formula for writing a Poe tale of mystery or horror, and conveniently forget to furnish us at the same time with a tale written according to their formula which at all equals one of his.

But, although we need not despair of Poe's growing in favor with the American public, there is abundant room to despair of any critic's changing his opinions at the point of someone else's pen, and so I hasten to my fourth and last head.

Poe makes his fourth claim to our attention in the slender volume of his verses. He was primarily a poet, and perhaps it is as a poet that he is chiefly valued by Englishmen and Ameri-

cans. His genius—on the side of melody and color—matured surprisingly, not to say regrettably, early, and even when his search for artistic perfection and the embarrassments of his life are taken into due account, his comparative infertility is a matter for wonder and disappointment. But his limited range accounts in part for the flawlessness of his workmanship when his art is at its best and for the intensity of the impression he produces upon appreciative readers. It is no small achievement to have sung a few imperishable songs of bereaved love and illusive beauty. It is no small achievement to have produced individual and unexcelled strains of harmony which have since so rung in the ears of brother poets that echoes of them may be detected even in the work of such original and accomplished versemen as Rossetti and Swinburne. It is no small achievement to have pursued one's ideal until one's dying day, conscious the while that, great as one's impediments have been from without, one's chief obstacle has been one's own self.

Yes, this man was a poet, and, whether great or not, a unique poet. We may not go to him for insight into the human heart such as Shakespeare gives us; we may not go to him for sublime inspiration such as Milton can give us; we may not go to him for the humanity

we find in Burns, the power we find in Byron, the idealism we find in Shelley, or the sweet wholesomeness we find in Longfellow; but we who care for him do go to him for his own note of longing and despair, for his own note of indescribable poetic magic, which, so far as I know, is to be found in no other of our poets—the note he strikes, for example, in the stanza:

> And all my days are trances,
> And all my nightly dreams
> Are where thy dark eye glances,
> And where thy footstep gleams,
> In what ethereal dances,
> By what eternal streams.

The man who wrote those lines is with his own Israfel. He is worthy of

> that lyre
> By which he sits and sings—
> The trembling, living wire
> Of those unusual strings.

DATE DUE

#47-0108 Peel Off Pressure Sensitive

A000030261
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PR 99 .T8
Trent, William Peterfield,
1862-
Longfellow, and other essays

[redacted] Oregon Library Commission 21 Mar 13

[redacted] GENERAL LOAN COLLECTION

RULES FOR BORROWERS

No Charge for Books.—The books circulated by the Commission are free to all citizens of Oregon who will agree to observe the rules of the library and pay transportation charges both ways on books loaned. Shipment is made by mail or express and all prepaid charges must be remitted upon receipt or return of package. Acknowledgment of receipt is required.

Borrowers.—Adults not previously registered as borrowers should apply through librarian of local public or traveling library, school officers or principal, county school superintendent, member of the legislature, officers of local grange or other permanent organization, or give reference to some state officer or employe located in Salem. Minors must obtain signature of local librarian or school principal.

Number of Volumes.—Any reasonable request for books will be granted if applicant wishes books for study or research work, and books are not needed elsewhere. Loans of fiction will be limited to two volumes.

Time Kept.—Books must be received at the library within twenty-one days from date of loan and may be renewed for two weeks upon request as long as needed for study, unless reserved for other borrowers. Date upon which books will be due **in the library** is given on notice of shipment which is sent for all loans. Certain books, generally in demand, will be issued for shorter period and may not be renewed. Requests for longer time will be granted, if possible, when loan is made.

Fines.—A fine of five cents a day must be paid for books kept, without renewal, beyond period for which loan is made. No book will be loaned to anyone who has failed to meet the obligations of borrowers as given in these rules. Notice will be sent when books are five days overdue without having been renewed.

Lost and Injured Books.—Borrowers are held responsible for books and are required to pay for lost and injured volumes. Number of pieces loaned is given on notification postal and borrowers are held responsible for this number unless notice of shortage or error is sent immediately upon receipt of package.

Books must be kept clean, must not be marked and corners of leaves must not be turned down.

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